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TERMS OF CORRUPTION:

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S *DICTIONARY* IN ITS CONTEXTS

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TERMS OF CORRUPTION:

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by

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TERMS OF CORRUPTION

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S *DICTIONARY* IN ITS CONTEXTS

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This dissertation revises our understanding of one of the most important and controversial works on language in the eighteenth century. It provides the first rhetorically situated analysis of the Preface, and offers new ways to read the *Dictionary* that take into account the hermeneutic challenges it poses. I employ replicable interpretive strategies for future students of the *Dictionary*, and offer a novel, substantive reconstruction of Johnson's philological methods and logic.

By rhetorically situating the Preface, reconstructing the interpretive logic of Johnson's philology, and recovering Johnson's complex and changing understanding of language change, this study makes a significant contribution to Johnson studies and revises our understanding of Johnson's place within the history of modern language study. Chapter 1, a rhetorical analysis of the Preface, reveals its importance as an early modern masterwork of scholarly self-fashioning in an age when self-promotion was both socially and morally awkward. This reading of the Preface moreover explains how and

why we should limit its role in determining our views about Johnson's ideas on language. Chapter 2 shows how Johnson's etymologies, definitions, and usage notes—usually regarded as discrete acts—are most fruitfully read as complementary interpretive activities. By showing how the parts of Johnson's entries fit together, and by recovering the overlooked connections between separate entries, I reconstruct the logic of Johnson's philological reasoning. Chapter 3 shows that, contrary to all accounts, Johnson's most common and most seemingly prescriptive term to describe language change, "corruption," is not just a term of condemnation, but a term of conjecture and inquiry operating within a context of early modern scientific discourse whereby all sublunary change is viewed as "corruption." As I demonstrate, Johnson's use of the term "corruption" signals his participation in a paradigm shift regarding thinking about language change and shows how he has more in common with nineteenth-century historical philologists than we ever imagined. An Epilogue provides a theoretical framework for reading the *Dictionary*. This dissertation not only challenges the ways that literary critics, linguists, and historians of the English language read the *Dictionary*, it provides sound and replicable ways to read this controversial classic text.

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Introduction

Samuel Johnson has been called many things, but he has rarely been called a linguist. In fact, with his many descriptions of language change as "corruption," Johnson is excluded from contemporary histories of linguistics, except as a negative example. If Johnson is, for James Boswell, "our great philologist," he is for modern linguists an emblem of bygone prescriptivism.[1] Modern treatments of Johnson associate him with the "doctrine of correctness," the "authoritarian principle in linguistic criticism," and the eighteenth-century "puristic movement."[2] The *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* includes Johnson under its entry on "Prescriptive Grammar," but excludes him from its entry on the history of linguistics.[3] Generally, linguists only mention Johnson or eighteenth-century language study to demonstrate antiquated, wrongheaded, or even morally dubious approaches to linguistics.

Leonard Bloomfield, pioneer of American structuralist linguistics and one of the most influential linguists of the twentieth century, contrasts his own approach with the "failures" of "eighteenth-century scholars," which for him include "the failure to distinguish between actual speech and the use of writing" and the conclusion that "languages are preserved by the usage of educated and careful people and changed by the

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[1] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-64), I, 187. All references to this text are designated hereafter as *Life*. When referring to multivolume standard editions of Johnson's works I use Roman numerals. For all other multivolume works I use Arabic numerals, in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[2] Sterling A. Leonard, *The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, 1929); Harold Byron Allen, "Samuel Johnson and the Authoritarian Principle in Linguistic Criticism" (PhD diss., University of Michigan 1940); Jean Aitchison, *Language Change: Progress or Decay?*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 8.

[3] Lesley Milroy and James Milroy, "Prescriptive Grammar," in William Bright, ed. *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3:269.

corruptions of the vulgar. In the case of modern languages like English," Bloomfield writes, "they believed, accordingly, that the speech-forms of books and upper-class conversation represented an older and purer level, from which the 'vulgarisms' of the common people had branched off as 'corruptions' by a process of 'linguistic decay.'" For Bloomfield, the notion of language change as "corruption" or "decay" is a misconception that left eighteenth-century "grammarians" free to "prescribe fanciful rules" and prevented them from making use of linguistic evidence.[4] Accurate linguistic analysis, according to this view, can only take place after exorcising morally laden terms like "corruption" from the linguist's interpretive vocabulary. One can only become a linguist after casting off both the terms of corruption and the mistaken notions they signify.

Johnson's writings on language abound with such terms, of course, which include not only "corruption," but also the closely related words "decay," "degeneration," "vitiation," and "depravation." Such terms, along with opposing terms of purity, like "undefiled" and "pure," lend Johnson's Preface to the *Dictionary* a strong moralistic tenor and place it in what James and Lesley Milroy call the "complaint tradition" of writings on English.[5] These terms of corruption suffuse the Preface, the most commonly cited source for Johnson's views on language, and inhabit some of its best known and most widely quoted passages. The English language, Johnson writes, has been "exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation." Spelling should not be made

[4] Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 8; also quoted in Scott Elledge, "The Naked Science of Language, 1747-1786," in *Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800: Essays in Honor of Samuel Holt Monk*, Howard Anderson and John S. Shea, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 293-94.

[5] For more on this complaint tradition, see Chapter 2 of James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999).

to "comply with the corruptions of oral utterance." "Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay." When language was "first reduced to an alphabet, every penman endeavoured to express, as he could, the sounds which he was accustomed to pronounce or to receive, and vitiated in writing such words as were already vitiated in speech." The "diction" of "the labourious and mercantile part of the people" is "always in a state of increase or decay," and "cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language;" it "therefore must be suffered to perish with other things unworthy of preservation." "Commerce. . . depraves the manners" as it "corrupts the language." It "is incident to words, as to their authours, to degenerate from their ancestors." "[T]ongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration." [6] Even when Johnson suggests that no lexicographer can "put a stop to those alterations" in language "which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it"—widely considered to be an example of Johnson's modernity and a gesture of descriptiveness—the "corruption" of language change figures as a sign of mutability and mortality. No nation has preserved its "words and phrases from mutability," Johnson writes. The lexicographer can no more "embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay," than he can "change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation."[7]

[6] Preface, paragraphs 3, 16, 17, 7, 80, 86, 27, 91. Unless otherwise noted, I use Mona Wilson's edition of the Preface, but cite paragraph numbers rather than page numbers to allow for readers who consult one of the various, widely available printings of the Preface. See "Preface to the English Dictionary," in *Johnson: Prose and Poetry*, ed. Mona Wilson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 301-23. Hereafter cited as Preface.

[7] Preface, para. 84.

Johnson's terms of corruption, apart from any other considerations, seem to identify him as a pre-linguistic thinker, and to place him squarely outside the realm of linguistics.

The present study of the *Dictionary* suggests, however, that Johnson is not a pre-linguistic thinker, but a linguist in his own right, though constrained by his own times and his own terms. Johnson's understanding of language change as corruption does not prevent him from distinguishing "actual speech" from "the use of writing," and it does not lead him to prefer "upper-class conversation." Linguistic corruption, like moral corruption, is for Johnson a consequence of the postlapsarian condition, not the exclusive characteristic of any particular station or condition. Writing in the *Rambler*, Johnson notes that the "greater part of mankind are corrupt in every condition, and differ in high and in low stations, only as they have more or fewer opportunities of gratifying their desires, or as they are more or less restrained by human censures."[8] Linguistic corruption, likewise, is common to those in "high and in low stations." It is a consequence of mortal fallibility and the vagaries of human history. Thus in the *Plan* for the *Dictionary*, Johnson writes, "our language. . . was produced by necessity and enlarged by accident, and is therefore composed of dissimilar parts, thrown together by negligence, by affectation, by learning, or by ignorance."[9] Johnson's concession in the Preface to the inevitability of language change likens the desire to preserve "words and phrases from mutability" to the

[8] *Rambler* 172 (9 November 1751), in *The Rambler*, eds. Walter Jackson Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, vols. III-V of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), V, 146. All *Rambler* citations refer to this edition.

[9] "The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language," in *Johnson: Prose and Poetry*, ed. Mona Wilson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 121-39; para. 31. Hereafter cited as *Plan*. As is the case with the Preface, I cite paragraphs not page numbers.

assumption that one could change "sublunary nature."[10] Language change is endemic to the human condition—as pervasive as human folly, as incurable as death. Under this view, "all things sublunary are subject to change."[11]

"Corruption," given this context, is not only a key term in our inherited discourse of moral lament and indignation, but a fundamental yet now obsolete term of early modern scientific discourse. While Johnson draws heavily on the moral tradition in the Preface, in the *Dictionary* itself he frequently draws on the tradition in natural philosophy that describes all sublunary change—even the change from wood to fire and the change from an egg to a chicken—as "corruption."[12] Because we are so familiar with the still active morally laden sense of the term that Johnson uses so conspicuously, we tend to read Johnson's comments on "corruption" in the *Dictionary* as a harsh term of opprobrium, regardless of the context. But throughout the *Dictionary*, Johnson uses "corruption" (in its various forms, "corrupted," "corrupt," and so on) not only as a usage label with prescriptive force but just as often as a term of linguistic conjecture and analysis. So in one entry we may find Johnson writing that the verb *to embezzle* "seems corrupted by an ignorant pronunciation from *imbecil*."[13] In another entry Johnson refers to corruption not so much to prescribe as to offer a conjectural etymology:

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[10] Preface, para. 84.

[11] This quote, used by Johnson to illustrate the usage of the word "sublunary," comes from "Dryden's Dufresnoy": "The celestial bodies above the moon being not subject to chance, remained in perpetual order, while all things sublunary are subject to change.

[12] "Wood is said to be *corrupted*, when we don't see it remain Wood any longer, but find Fire in its stead. And thus the Egg is *corrupted*, when it ceases to be an Egg, and we find a Chicken in its room."Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), 332, sig. Qqqq2v.

[13] Johnson illustrates his two definitions for *to embezzle* with quotes from historian Sir John Hayward (c. 1560-1627) and John Dryden. In the entry for *to imbecile*, which Johnson derives ultimately from the French *imbecile* and the Latin *imbecilis*, he also notes, "This word is corruptly written *embezzle*."

> DOT. n.s. [This is derived by *Skinner* from *dotter*, German, *the white of an egg*, and interpreted by him a grume of pus. It has now no such signification, and seems rather corrupted from *jot*, a point.] A small point or spot made to mark any place in a writing.[14]

Johnson's comment on *dot* may be intended to carry prescriptive force, but just as importantly it serves as a conjectural etymology, an alternative to Skinner's analysis. While modern etymologists prefer to derive *dot* from an Old English word meaning the "head of a boil," the point is not whether Johnson was right. Johnson, to be sure, did not have access to the single extant example from the Old English corpus now supporting that derivation. Likewise, Johnson lacks the information modern linguists use to say that a change from "j" to "d" is not likely.[15] The point, rather, is that Johnson uses "corrupted" here as a term of analysis rather than complaint.

An anecdote from Boswell's *Life* illustrates the way Johnson employs, as an analytic tool, the causes of linguistic corruption that he laments elsewhere. Boswell finds Johnson preparing the revision of his *Dictionary*." Then they talk "of languages."

> Johnson observed, that Leibnitz had made some progress in a work, tracing all languages up to the Hebrew. 'Why, Sir, (said he,) you would not imagine that the French *jour*, day, is derived from the Latin *dies*, and yet nothing is more certain; and the intermediate steps are very clear. From *dies*, comes *diurnus*. *Diu* is, by inaccurate ears, or inaccurate pronunciation, easily confounded with *giu*; then the

[14] Unless otherwise noted, I use fourth edition (1773) of Johnson's *Dictionary*, the edition Johnson revised, as my copy-text for entries, but I always consult the first edition (1755) and generally note differences between these editions when they occur.

[15] In proposing a change from *jot* from *dot*, Johnson proposes a kind of reverse palatalization. The change from a "d" sound to a "j" sound, as in "soldier," is an example of palatalization. The same process can be heard as a change from a "t" to a "ch" sound in the way some British speakers of English prounounce the word "tune" ("choon"). Palatalization is common in languages across the world and tends to occur to certain consonant sounds when they precede what are known to linguists as "front vowels." The "o" in "dot," however, is likely a "back vowel" and thus would not be expected to trigger palatalization. Johnson seems to note a correspondence between "d" and "j" sounds in English pronunciation, but lacks the means to judge the likelihood of this particular change.

> Italians form a substantive of the ablative of an adjective, and thence *giurno*, or, as they make it, *giorno*; which is readily contracted into *giour*, or *jour*.'"[16]

While Johnson may get some details wrong here, the interesting thing is not whether or not he is precisely right, but the fact that he does not lament inaccuracy and confusion—the mechanisms of corruption, so to speak. Rather, he uses them to help justify a derivation that "you would not imagine" but whose "intermediate steps are very clear." Johnson certainly decries "corruptions of ignorance" and the "corruptions of oral utterance," and he urges their avoidance, but when he observes language across time, his ideas about what letters might be "easily confounded" by "inaccurate ears" or "inaccurate pronunciation" and his assumptions about what might be "readily contracted" transform these comments on corruption from topoi of the prescriptive complaint tradition to nascent tools of the descriptive linguist's trade.

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Johnson's concession in the Preface to the inevitability of language change is generally the aperçu we consult to understand Johnson's attitudes toward language change and his place in the history of language study. Almost any summary treatment of the *Dictionary* includes some account—however abbreviated, however qualified—of Johnson's intellectual trajectory from linguistic prescriptivism in the *Plan* to descriptivism.[17] The Preface has even been taken to represent "Johnson's final views on

[16] *Life*, II, 156. This episode occurs in March of 1772, one year before the revised fourth edition appears.

[17] For instance, Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman write, "The aim of most early lexicographers, whom Dr. Johnson called 'harmless drudges,' was to 'prescribe' rather than 'describe' the words of a language, to be, as in the stated aim of one Webster's dictionaries, the 'supreme authority' of the 'correct' pronunciation and meaning of a word. It is to Johnson's credit that in his Preface he stated he could not construct the language but could only 'register the language.' *An Introduction to Language*, 6th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 66. C. M. Millward writes, "When Samuel Johnson announced

questions of language."[18] I would like to argue, however, that Boswell's account of Johnson's derivation of *jour* is just as important to our understanding of Johnson's developing views on language change and our understanding of his philological work in the *Dictionary*. Yet those who are skeptical about the accuracy of any Johnsonian quote in Boswell's *Life* may protest. Why should we substitute Boswell's account of an offhand remark for Johnson's own words in the Preface?

For several reasons. First, because the comment is an offhand remark, it is not compromised by the complex, self-defensive rhetoric of self-fashioning that pervades the Preface. Johnson's representation of language in the Preface, by contrast, is hyperbolically charged with terms and tropes that emphasize the difficulties that language, by its very nature, pose for him and his task. If Johnson is not able to "fix" the language as some had hoped, it is because of the intractable nature of language and the numerous, unstoppable causes of language change, which Johnson amplifies with rhetorical self-consciousness. Moreover, the observation on *jour* is offered as a remarkable, even surprising, insight or discovery. One "would not imagine" such a derivation, yet "nothing is more certain." Johnson's confidence in relating the presumably counterintuitive circumstances of *jour*'s derivation comes from years of studying, and reflecting on, such details of language change—not only in compiling the *Dictionary*, but in editing an edition of Shakespeare's works, and in his countless

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his plan for a dictionary in 1747, he stated that his purpose was to refine and fix the language. In the course of his seven years of compiling *A Dictionary of the English Language* (two volumes, 1755), he gradually recognized the impossibility of achieving this goal, realizing that no living language could ever be fixed and that language change was inevitable." *A Biography of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1996), 240.

[18] James McLaverty, "From Definition to Explanation: Locke's Influence on Johnson's Dictionary," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47(1986): 378.

revisions of the *Dictionary*'s fourth edition. Such a derivation, enthusiastically related to Boswell during a break from those revisions, suggests that the Preface does not, in fact, represent Johnson's final views on language. In its rendering of a "very clear" series of "intermediate steps" from *dies* to *jour* this derivation is a more orderly depiction of language change than any we find in the Preface. In fact, Johnson's derivation of *jour* captures, as much as anything in the *Plan* or the Preface, the logic of Johnson's linguistic analysis in the *Dictionary*. Johnson's etymological deduction from *dies* to *giorno* to *jour* suggests the kinds of sound correspondences Johnson may consider, for instance, when positing the connection between *dot* and *jot*. It also helps illustrate that, contrary to many accounts, Johnson does not ignore oral language in the *Dictionary*, but uses his knowledge of the "corruptions of oral utterance" to inform his philological judgments.

Boswell's anecdote also suggests that, in addition to the terms of corruption we expect to encounter when Johnson describes language change—the morally laden evaluative terms like "decay," "degeneration," "vitiation," and "depravation" in the Preface; "bad," and "barbarous" among his usage notes—we should be prepared to recognize another related set of terms of corruption, including but not limited to "contraction," "composition" (compounding), "coalition," "softening" and various forms of the verb "to confound." "*Diu* is. . . easily confounded with *giu*." *Giorno* "is readily contracted into *giour*, or *jour*."

Johnson employs these perhaps less conspicuous terms of corruption in the *Dictionary* to describe what he treats as common processes of language change, or types of corruption. Johnson often uses one of those terms, "confound," to describe words

whose meanings are confused with one another, as "satire" and "lampoon," "pot" and "kettle," "thief" and "robber." But as the derivation of *jour* indicates, Johnson also uses these terms to describe the confounding of "letters." In his *Dictionary* entry for the letter B, Johnson writes that it

> has a near affinity with the other labial letters, and is confounded by the Germans with *P*, and by the Gascons with *V*; from which an epigrammatist remarks, that *bibere* and *vivere* are in Gascony the same. The Spaniards, in most words, use *B* or *V* indifferently.

Johnson makes similar observations in his etymology for *tribe*, noting that *b* and *v* are "labials of promiscuous use in the ancient British words."

> [*tribu*, Fr. *tribus*, Lat. from *trev*, *b* and *v* being labials of promiscuous use in the ancient British words; *trev* from *tir ef*, his lands, is supposed to be Celtick, and used before the Romans had any thing to do with the British government. . . .]

In another context, Johnson might censure phonetic promiscuity or so-called indifferent pronunciation, but in these instances they are phenomena of interest to philology.

The word "contraction" is another important term of corruption in Johnson's descriptive linguistic vocabulary. In some entries, Johnson uses the terms "contraction" and "corruption" almost interchangeably. In one entry Johnson describes the word *nys* as an obsolete "corruption of *ne is*." Yet in the entry for *ne*, Johnson describes *nis* as an example of "contraction in compound words."

> NE. adv. [Saxon. This particle was formerly of very frequent use, both singly and by contraction in compound words; as, *nill* for *ne will* or *will not*; *nas* for *ne has* or *has not*; *nis* for *ne is* or *is not*.] Neither; and not.

"Contraction" is, then, a kind of corruption. Thus in the entry for the noun *remnant* Johnson writes that it is "corrupted from *remanent*"; in the entry for *remanent*, Johnson writes, "It is now contracted to *remnant*." The term "contraction," like the term

"corruption," can carry a prescriptive or descriptive emphasis, depending on the context. One can certainly find Johnson elsewhere censuring contraction: *phiz* is a "ridiculous contraction" of *physiognomy*, and the verb *to hyp* "barbarously contracted from *hypochondriack*." But in the entry for *ne* Johnson is describing, not condemning usage. "Contraction," like "corruption," is also a term of conjectural etymology, as in the entry for *ant*:

> ANT.n.s. [*æmett*, Sax. which *Junius* imagines, not without probability, to have been first contracted to *æmt*, and then softened to *ant*.]

These terms of corruption seem to signify for Johnson universal processes of language change that often work in tandem with one another. By using these terms, language change is describable within the framework of corruption that is generally used to describe processes of material change in early modern Europe. We generally overlook this latter lexicon of corruption in the *Dictionary* because its terms are often employed in the etymologies, often ignored because they are deemed ignorant and thus worthless. Moreover, we overlook them because we generally do not associate them with Johnson's term "corruption," which is generally read as moralistic complaint, as in the Preface, or as a usage note alongside his comments on "barbarous" words, rather than a descriptive term of analysis or a heuristic term of discovery in the *Dictionary*.

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Currently, there is no account of these heuristic terms of corruption in any account of Johnson's ideas about language or his 'language theory.' This is largely due to the fact that Johnson's handling of "corruption" in the Preface, rather than the *Dictionary* itself, is what most scholars are really writing about when they write about either Johnson's use of

"corruption" or his views on language change. James McLaverty writes, for instance, that Johnson

> believed language participated in a general movement towards decay, since "it is incident to words, as to their authors, to degenerate from their ancestors;" and though he recognized that individual languages might follow a pattern from rudeness, through perfection, to false refinement and declension, the movement from language to language he always regarded as one of degeneration; modern words are inferior to their originals.[19]

Taken from its context in the Preface, where Johnson is defending the fact that words he portrays as etymologically related "do not always agree in sense," this statement is made to represent, generally, Johnson's views on language change and his views on "modern words."[20] Yet it seems inadequate to describe Johnson's account of the movement from *dies* to *diurnus* to *giurnus*, thence to *giurno*, *giour*, and finally to *jour*, as a "general movement towards decay." It is unclear, likewise, whether Johnson views *jour* as somehow inferior to *dies*. In fact, such an observation seems beside the point Johnson is making to Boswell about *jour*; so also does it seem beside the point in Johnson's conjectural derivation, in the *Dictionary*, of *harangue*:

> HARA'NGUE. n.s. [*harangue*, French. The original of the French word is much questioned: *Menage* thinks it a corruption of *hearing*, English; *Junius* imagines it to be *discours au rang*, to a circle, which the Italian *arringo* seems to favour. Perhaps it may be from *orare*, or *orationare*, *orationer*, *oraner*, *aranger*, *haranguer*.] A speech; a popular oration.[21]

Putting aside the fact that modern etymologists favor Junius's etymology, what is striking, for our purposes, is Johnson's conjectural etymology, which is not adequately described as a postulated negative trajectory "toward decay." Like the derivation of *jour*,

[19] James McLaverty, "From Definition to Explanation," 381.
[20] Preface, para. 27.
[21] I have removed the illustrative quotations.

this derivation proposes a series of changes which includes losses and additions, rather than a simple movement toward decay. Johnson's postulated corruptions are an alternative to those of Menage, and are further supported by Johnson's assessment of the definition: "a speech; a popular oration."

However ridiculous they may seem to a modern etymologist, Johnson's conjectures about the etymology of *harangue* assume the operation of general processes of language change Johnson observes elsewhere, such as contraction, as well as another kind of "corruption," the addition of *h* to the beginning of a word, that Johnson assumes in the etymology for *hatchment*:

> HA'TCHMENT. n.s. [Corrupted from *atchievement*. See ATCHIEVEMENT.] Armorial escutcheon placed over a door at a funeral.[22]

The proposed changes from *atchievement* to *hatchment*, like those from *dies* to *jour*, from *orationare* to *harangue*, involve losses and additions, not a simple movement toward decay or a movement from superiour to inferior. Yet without the close examination of Johnson's terms of corruption, and the countless observations on language change in which they are employed in the *Dictionary*, the rhetorically charged Preface will dominate discussions of Johnson's ideas about "corruption" and about language change.

A closer examination of Johnson's terms of corruption is also in order because these terms are often deployed by scholars who find in them evidence not only of hegemony, xenophobia, and "anxiety," but also misogyny, and even a delusional retreat from the reality of living language into a Platonic world of pure, ideal lexical forms. As is

[22] The *Dictionary* contains no entry for *atchievement*, but does contain an entry for *an achievement* whose second definition is similar to the one given for *hatchment*. The entry for *hatchment* contains an illustration, which I exclude here, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

usually the case, the terms of corruption as found in the Preface dominate the discussion. Deidre Lynch, who views Johnson as "the Tory lexicographer" with a "distaste for social mobility," finds in his terms of corruption and purity evidence for her view that "by questing after the uncorrupted" Johnson "backs into Platonism." Johnson's lexicography, Lynch writes, involves a general "retreat from a documentary engagement with the real." Thus Johnson, seeking ideal Platonic forms, retreats from "a recalcitrant material world where ordinary language—realism—proves inadequate to the conservationist's mission."[23] Olivia Smith, who studies the linguistic ideas of Johnson "in so far as they contributed to the hegemony of language, justifying and perpetuating class divisions," reads Johnson's comments on "corruption" as an indicator of his "political position." Johnson's "Preface and his definitions betray his political position, both his anger at corruption and his distrust of expanding political power beyond traditional boundaries."[24] Rajani Sudan reads the Preface as part of a larger effort to "illustrate Johnson's definition of English culture as one produced through xenophobia." Interested in "issues of contamination" that "inform Johnson's lexicographic task," Sudan analyzes Johnson's "Johnson's anxiety about the possibility of linguistic infection" as it seems to appear in his comments in the Preface on "jargon which serves the traffickers on the *Mediterranean* and *Indian* coasts."[25] "Johnson's anxiety" seems "to be class based as well as xenophobic," thus "Johnson aligns 'strangers' with corruption, and particularly

[23] Deidre Lynch, "'Beating the Track of the Alphabet': Samuel Johnson, Tourism, and the ABCs of Modern Authority," *ELH* 57 (1990): 381, 377, 389, 378, 373.
[24] Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 4, 16, 14.
[25] Rajani Sudan, Chapter 1, "Institutionalizing Xenophobia: Johnson's Project," in *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 26-7, 33, 38; Preface, para. 86.

strangers from exoticized ports of exchange. . . The "mingled" mongrel dialect such traffickers speak" may infect "the proper language" and thus hinder "the lexicographer's search for linguistic 'purity.'"[26] Unfortunately, Sudan, like Lynch and for the most part Smith, relies exclusively on the Preface to make her claims about Johnson's lexicographic task.

For Janet Sorenson, Johnson's thoughts on corruption are an index of his animus toward "contemporary" usage and the "associative, random, creative aspects of metaphor," as well as the "common people," "outsiders," and women.[27] On the basis of Johnson's comment in the Preface that "words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven," Sorenson argues that Johnson "genders the 'living' language he confronts female, especially in its tendency towards growth and corruption."[28] This "gendering of language change," Sorenson writes, "corresponds to an Enlightenment image of nature as wild and entangled, fluid and unstable, in need of order and hierarchy." After aligning Johnson "with such Enlightenment figures as the encyclopedia writer or scientist," who are "continually asserting an ordering force over a feminized

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[26] Rajani Sudan, *Fair Exotics*, 38.

[27] Janet Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteeenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 2, "'A grammarian's regard to the genius of our tongue': Johnson's *Dictionary*, Imperial Grammar, and the Customary National Language," 73, 74, 93, 103, 77-8.

[28] Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire*, 77. Johnson's depiction of words as the "daughters of the earth" comes from the Preface, para. 17, and is, according to Steven Lynn, an allusion to Genesis 6.1-2. Johnson's allusion comes on the heels of his appeal for "steadiness and uniformity" in written language. Johnson wants to make it clear that this "recommendation. . . does not proceed from an opinion, that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness; or that truth may not be successfully taught by modes of spelling fanciful and erroneous: I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that *words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven*." For Lynn's observation, see "Locke's Eye, Adam's Tongue, Johnson's Word: Language, Marriage, and 'The Choice of Life,'" *The Age of Johnson* 3 (1990): 58. Citing Lynn's observation on this allusion, Dennis Dean Kezar, Jr. writes, "This enigmatic metaphor, which most critics conclude is Johnson's own," also draws from "eighteenth-century iconography that traditionally represented language as female." See "Radical Letters and Male Genealogies in Johnson's *Dictionary*," *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995): 515 n. 24.

space of the unknown and unordered," Sorenson employs Johnson's terms of corruption in the Preface to display a "revealing characterization of the *Dictionary* project," one in which Johnson's rational inquiry is, disturbingly, a kind of sublimated necrophilia:

> Johnson images [sic] the lexicographer's ultimate dream as being able to "embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay"; the ideal form for the object of examination is life-less but life-like, at best a perfectly preserved corpse. In this necrophillic figure is a revealing characterization of the *Dictionary* project. The body of language—gendered female—is open for endless inspection, preserved intact so that a total knowledge is possible. Dead, it is no longer capable of the entangling threat of unregulated growth. It is perhaps predictable, then, that Johnson describes his desire to "pierce deep into every science."[29]

Sorenson's "necrophillic figure" is certainly a nightmarish vision of the "Enlightenment mind" and its presumed desires.[30] But by conjuring a phantom "body of language" out of disparate metaphors in the Preface, Sorenson constructs a caricature, rather than a "revealing characterization of the *Dictionary* project." In contrast to the previous studies cited, Sorenson's study does not rely exclusively on the Preface to characterize the *Dictionary*, but the image she offers as a "revealing characterization of the *Dictionary* project" depends on her reading of the Preface and its terms of corruption.

More sympathetic readers of the Preface also depend on it almost exclusively to characterize Johnson's use of "corruption." For example, Nicholas Hudson, defending Johnson against the charge that he "attempted to serve the linguistic demands of the rich and powerful, or to exclude the idiom of the poor or vulgar," argues that Johnson "laid most of the blame for the recent corruption of English not on speakers but on 'penmen'

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[29] Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 77-78.

[30] Citing the work of Ruth Salvaggio, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous, Sorenson writes that the "Enlightenment mind" figured the "space" of nature—an "'other' space"—as a "fluid realm outside the pristine islands and systems of men." Thus, according to Sorenson, William Warburton's metaphor of the "wide sea of words" and Johnson's metaphorical descriptions of language as a "maze" in which he might be entangled are necessarily gendered figurations of language. See Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 77-78.

and those he called 'illiterate writers,'" constituents of a "predominately literate" and "mercantile middle-class." "Linguistic disorder springs not from people at the lower end of the social spectrum, but from those who have had some education and leisure to think," including the "idle upper classes" that were "one important source of the cant and improper innovation that he sought to correct."[31] Ultimately, Hudson's claim that Johnson blames the leisured classes, not "people at the lower end of the social spectrum," for "linguistic disorder" suffers because it places too much emphasis on the need to find an element of society from which "linguistic disorder springs" in Johnson's view.

It seems difficult to argue that Johnson singles out any class of people as the exclusive cause of "linguistic disorder" when he observes that English is "variable by the caprice of every one that speaks it" while "our language is yet living."[32] If "corruptions" are the product of "oral utterance—if vowels are "capriciously pronounced" and "differently modified, by accident or affectation, not only in every province, but in every mouth"—how can any class of speakers be especially to blame for "corruption"?[33] If Johnson points out that the "fugitive cant" of "the laborious and mercantile part of the people" is "always in a state of increase or decay," he also observes that language change necessarily accompanies the "leisure to think," the "increase of knowledge," the "cultivation of various sciences," the "tropes of poetry," and the increase of "politeness."[34] If "traffickers on the *Mediterranean* and *Indian* coasts" must "in time learn a mingled dialect," so also languages "will always be mixed, where a chief part of

[31] Nicholas Hudson, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and the Politics of 'Standard English,'" *Yearbook of English Studies: Eighteenth-Century Lexis and Lexicography* 28 (1998): 86-7.
[32] Preface, para. 45.
[33] Preface, paras. 16, 10.
[34] Preface, paras. 80, 87-89.

education, and the most conspicuous accomplishment, is skill in ancient or foreign tongues."[35] Language change is attributed to human fallibility generally in the Preface as much as anything else. It is the product of "ignorance" and "affectation," "negligence" and "caprice," qualities not restricted to any particular station in life. Language change is a consequence of life, of "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination."[36] If Johnson wishes that language "might be less apt to decay," he does not desire Sorenson's "perfectly preserved corpse" for inspection, but rather tries to explain why language change is unavoidable so long as "our language is yet living."[37]

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Despite their clear importance to our understanding of Johnson's views on language, his terms of corruption are only part of the story. This study aims to challenge not only the ways we typically read Johnson's terms of corruption, but the ways in which we typically arrive at our understanding of Johnson's views on language change, and most generally, the ways we tend to read—or consult—the *Dictionary*. The generally neglected heuristic terms of "corruption" suffuse the *Dictionary* and disclose essential operative assumptions about language change employed by Johnson throughout. But in order to recover these neglected terms and the knowledge they bear about Johnson as a linguist, we must first understand why we cannot merely rely on the Preface alone to understand how Johnson views language change. And if we are to consult the *Dictionary*

[35] Preface, paras. 86, 89.
[36] "Preface to Shakespeare, 1765," in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, vols. VII-VIII of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), VII, 66.
[37] Preface, paras. 17, 45.

for such understanding, we must also find feasible, manageable ways to read this important and controversial text, which is of such importance to eighteenth-century studies, as well as the histories of English and English lexicography. Moreover, we need to reexamine the interpretive conventions and assumptions we bring to the *Dictionary* when we do consult it. Finally, we must be sensitive to the semantic slippage present in Johnson's evaluative and descriptive terms, which like the term "corruption" are by turns, sometimes simultaneously, prescriptive and descriptive.

To achieve these aims, this study includes chapters examining, in order, the Preface, the textual nature and structure of the *Dictionary* and its implications for our readings of the *Dictionary*, and Johnson's use of corruption as a term of linguistic analysis. Chapter 1, a rhetorical analysis of the Preface, reveals its importance as an early modern masterwork of scholarly self-fashioning in an age when self-promotion was both socially and morally awkward. This reading of the Preface moreover explains how and why we should limit its role in determining our views about Johnson's ideas on language. Chapter 2 shows how Johnson's etymologies, definitions, and usage notes—usually regarded as discrete acts—are most fruitfully read as complementary interpretive activities. By showing how the parts of Johnson's entries fit together, and by recovering the overlooked connections between separate entries, I reconstruct the logic of Johnson's philological reasoning. Chapter 3 shows that, contrary to all accounts, Johnson's most common and most seemingly prescriptive term to describe language change, "corruption," is not just a term of condemnation, but a term of conjecture and inquiry operating within a context of early modern scientific discourse whereby all sublunary

change is viewed as "corruption." As I demonstrate, Johnson's use of the term "corruption" reveals his changing views on language change and shows how he has more in common with nineteenth-century historical philologists than we ever imagined. I close with an epilogue placing my own work in the context of Peter Rabinowitz's idea of "authorial reading," which involves "accepting the author's invitation to read in a particular socially constituted way that is shared by the author and his or her expected readers."[38] Such a reading of Johnson's *Dictionary*, I argue, provides a useful point of orientation for future scholars of this classic and controversial text.

[38] Peter Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 2nd ed. David H. Richter, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 1000.

Chapter 1, The Rhetoric of Johnson's Preface to the *Dictionary*

While few modern readers have actually consulted a copy of the *Dictionary*, many have read its widely anthologized Preface. The Preface has always served as a crucial mediator between reader and text—so much so that it often substitutes for the text it introduces. And while scholars have long praised the Preface for its grand pathos, or pointed out the fact that Johnson drew heavily on commonplaces, they have rarely considered how awkward and vexing it may have been for Johnson to compose it. But if, as scholars suggest, Johnson composed the Preface between the summer and autumn of 1754, his rhetorical circumstances were unprecedented, despite a long tradition of dictionary and scholarly prefaces.[39] Monolingual English dictionaries had been offered to the public since Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabetical* in 1604, but they were works of humble pretensions compiled "as well for the Entertainment of the Curious as the Information of the Ignorant."[40] Johnson's work, by contrast, was marketed as a work of

[39] There is currently no conclusive evidence to indicate exactly when Johnson wrote the Preface. We can confidently date it after 3 April 1753, when Johnson writes that he has not yet begun writing it; *Diaries, Prayers, and Annals*, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr., with Donald and Mary Hyde, Vol. I of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 50. The two most detailed studies of the Dictionary's composition—James H. Sledd and Gwin J. Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary: Essays in the Biography of a Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 110; and Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary, 1746-1773*, Revised Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75—both conjecture that Johnson wrote the Preface and other prefatory materials in 1754 (summer for Sledd and Kolb, summer-autumn for Reddick) once he had given his printer, William Strahan, the complete manuscript for Vol. II of the *Dictionary*. For arguments about when Johnson completed the *Dictionary* manuscript, see Sledd and Kolb, 109-10, and Reddick, 73-4. Chesterfield's first puff for the *Dictionary* appeared in *The World* for 28 November, 1754, and Johnson both wrote his letter to Chesterfield and received his honorary degree in February 1755. David Fleeman conjectures that as late as 21 December 1754 "Johnson had not yet written his 'Preface' and other preliminary essays"; see "Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary*, 1755," in *Samuel Johnson, 1709-84: A Bicentenary Exhibition* (The Arts Council of Great Britain: London, 1984), 41. In this section of this chapter I cite the 1747 and 1755 editions of the *Plan* and Preface, respectively, and cite signature marks rather than page numbers. See notes 43 and 46 below.

[40] *London Evening Post*, (30 April 1745), 3, from an advertisement for the eleventh edition of Nathaniel Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, reprinted in facsimile in James Tierney, "Book Advertisements in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Newspapers: The Example of Robert Dodsley," in *A Genius for*

national consequence—a work of great import and significant mental labor—a dictionary "in the superior sense of that title."[41] Consequently, in the Preface Johnson was introducing a work of great scholarly ambition, an English dictionary to place alongside the academic dictionaries of France and Italy.

But in the summer and autumn of 1754, Samuel Johnson was still an Oxford dropout who lacked even a bachelor's degree, and the task of introducing his own work to the public must have been challenging. Johnson's task was made more awkward because he had publicly dedicated the 1747 *Plan* of the *Dictionary* to a patron, Lord Chesterfield, who appeared by the autumn of 1754 to have forgotten his charge until late November of that year, when the *Dictionary* was in the final stages of its printing. Thus Johnson would have to commit, quite carefully, an act of erasure in the Preface. Writing the Preface without the legitimizing cachet of a patron or even a dignified list of subscribers, Johnson was in the awkward position of putting *himself* forward—of recommending himself and his own work to the public. To do so was no easy task at a time when professional writers, caught between the degrading image of Grub Street hacks and the inaccessible ethos of leisured writers untainted by lucre, "did not fit into prevailing ideas about how the literary world was constructed."[42] Johnson's task was further complicated by the fact that while his *Dictionary* was a work of great scholarly ambition, it lacked the traditional textual signs of aristocratic support for such work—a

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Letters: Booksellers and Bookselling from the 16th to the 20th Century, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1995), 108. The standard scholarly work on monolingual English dictionaries before Johnson is DeWitt T. Starnes and Gertrude E. Noyes, *The English Dictionary from Cawdrey to Johnson 1604-1755* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946).

[41] *The World*, No. 100 (28 November 1754), 601.

[42] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 144.

dedication or a list of noble subscribers—so it was ostensibly "nothing but a bookseller's job," as one contemporary described it.[43]

Although Johnson's private letter to Chesterfield has, in hindsight, been seen as a symbolic declaration of independence for modern authors, it is the *Dictionary*'s Preface, not the unpublished letter to Chesterfield, in which Johnson first presents himself to the public as a man unbeholden to the traditional legitimizers of scholarship—the aristocracy and the academy. As Johnson writes, "the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and sorrow."[44] Johnson never disavowed the ideal of patronage in principle and later relished the opportunity to don his Oxford gown, once he received his honorary M.A., but when he wrote the Preface, he could not claim the support of either legitimizing institution.[45] He would be including no dedication to an authorizing noble, nor was he even able to tender the cultural capital afforded by academic degree letters after his name. In effect, by means of his rhetorical performance

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[43] James L. Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson: Samuel Johnson's Middle Years*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 141. This comment appears in a letter from Thomas Edwards to Daniel Wray. Clifford describes Edwards as "a stalwart Whig" and claims that "much of his attack was politically based."

[44] Samuel Johnson, Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1755), Sig. C2^{r}.

[45] While Johnson, of course, secured his honorary M.A. from Oxford in time to place the designation after his name on the title page, he almost certainly wrote the Preface before knowing that the degree was his. Johnson was aware in November 1754 that Thomas Warton and Francis Wise were working to obtain the degree, but he did not know even as late as 13 February 1755 where the matter of his degree stood. Once Johnson learned of receiving the degree on 25 February 1755, only one day elapsed before newspaper advertisements appeared, beginning 27 February 1755, announcing the imminent publication of the *Dictionary*. For Johnson's letters regarding the degree, see *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford, 5 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992-94), I, 88-90, 91-92, 94, 97-101**.** This edition will be cited hereafter as *Letters*. Regarding the first advertisements for the *Dictionary*, see Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 110. Having received the degree, Johnson, on a visit to Oxford, wrote, "I have been in my gown ever since I came here." One observer reports that Johnson "prided himself in being, during his visits to Oxford, accurately in all points; and he wore his [M.A.] gown almost *ostentatiously*," *Letters*, I, 186 and 186 n. 2.

in the Preface, Johnson would have to establish his ethos independent of those traditional, implicit yet powerful means of legitimation. Johnson adopted this approach by necessity, not by choice, and his Preface is the reluctant self-promotion of an uncredentialed scholar whose public reputation was still in flux.

While some scholars have discussed the pathos of the Preface, its ideological underpinnings, or even some of its evident strains of self-promotion, most scholarly treatments of the Preface pay little attention to the complex material and rhetorical circumstances that would have been most significant to Johnson as he, for the first time, fashioned his independent and authoritative public ethos, presenting himself apart from any other authorizing agent.[46] Certain material circumstances, such as the size and price of his book, and the realities of the way books were reviewed and received, constituted some of the most obvious elements of Johnson's rhetorical situation, shaping his assumptions about audience and his decisions about how to present himself to the public. Subsequent scholarship has characterized Johnson's ethos as a proudly professional author, but it is more accurate to say that he was apologetically professional at a time when writing for the booksellers carried little or no cachet, especially in a work of such scholarly ambition. Johnson made no mention of his "professional status" except indirectly, by noting his lack of dependence on patrons or academe.

Johnson's material circumstances, and the material qualities of his book, would restrict the rhetoric available to him as he presented himself to the public. He needed to

[46] Daniel P. Gunn provides a useful reading of the Preface as "a work of art in its own right" but in reading the Preface apart from historical conditions, "for its own sake, as a complex and carefully wrought text," Gunn's study leaves unexplained contexts which help account for what he describes as "Johnson's unusual emphasis on himself and his efforts throughout the Preface." "The Lexicographer's Task: Language, Reason, and Idealism in Johnson's *Dictionary* Preface," *The Age of Johnson* 11 (2000): 105, 106 and 113.

adopt a tone and manner that was appropriately authoritative, given the audacious nature of his work, which he fashioned in the *Plan* as a part of a daunting "contest with united academies and long successions of learned compilers."[47] Yet Johnson's circumstances as a writer for hire prevented his adopting the traditional pose of the leisured author whose work was the "diversion of some of my Idle and Happy Hours."[48] Still, the ambitious nature of Johnson's *Dictionary* meant that he would need to differentiate himself from those "several authors, who, without any pretensions to genius, or human literature, earned a very genteel subsistence, by undertaking work for booksellers, in which reputation was not at all concerned."[49] Johnson was presenting serious scholarship, presumed to be undertaken for the greater good, but underwritten by booksellers, not patrons. As well, Johnson was directly addressing the public in his own voice, and under no one's wing, for the first time—all of this at a time when the future for Johnson was quite unclear.[50] Constrained and influenced by these material and rhetorical circumstances, Johnson set out to defend his work.

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[47] Samuel Johnson, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language*; *Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of* CHESTERFIELD; *One of His MAJESTY'S Principal Secretaries of State*, (London, 1747), Sig. E[r].

[48] John Locke, "Epistle to the Reader," *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (1975; repr. with corrections, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979 [1690]), 6.

[49] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, ed. James L. Clifford (London: Oxford University Press, 1964 [1751]), 637. O M Brack, Jr. and Thomas Kaminski cite this passage to illustrate the character of the *Medicinal Dictionary*, for which Johnson wrote a dedication; "Johnson, James, and the 'Medicinal Dictionary,'" *Modern Philology* 81 (1983-84): 381.

[50] Johnson's name had certainly appeared in print alongside his work before—when *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was published, when *Irene* was published, and on the title page of his *Plan*—but not often. The *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays and his "Life of Savage" were published anonymously, even if certain friends and literati knew he wrote them. But before writing the Preface, Johnson had never been in the position of having to explain or justify his work in direct address to the reading public. The *Plan*, of course, was addressed to Lord Chesterfield. Despite the *Plan*'s pragmatic function as a marketing tool, structurally and symbolically, members of the reading public are not addressees, but rather witnesses of Johnson's address to Chesterfield. Chesterfield, not the reader, is asked to consider the merits of Johnson's scheme.

Johnson's Preface is a careful work of scholarly self-advocacy, a proleptic apologia in which he adapts the rhetoric of self-presentation both to the material circumstances of the *Dictionary*'s production and reception, and to the awkward necessity of having to promote himself at a time when scholarly self-promotion was socially and morally awkward. Among the handful of scholarly treatments of the Preface, no study has approached it as a historically situated rhetorical document. While most treatments of the Preface recognize its rhetorical power, none has considered why Johnson might have chosen to lend this text such moral and philosophical resonance beyond his propensity toward the philosophical. A rhetorically situated study will not only recover important contexts of the Preface, but also will address some uncertain readings of its audience and ethos. No study of the Preface has adequately considered these material and rhetorical contexts, though they would have been essential to Johnson's estimation of his rhetorical situation, and to his judgments about audience and ethos. As Donald Siebert has suggested about Johnson's later Preface to Shakespeare, the Preface to the *Dictionary* is in some ways as much about Johnson as it is about the *Dictionary*.[51] Understanding these contexts reminds us that the Preface is not simply an outline of lexicographic methodology, or an unselfconscious effusion of emotion or ironic humility. Rather it is a subtly crafted rhetorical self-construction calibrated to make the most of an awkward rhetorical situation. This essay attempts to establish what Gérard Genette might term Johnson's "prefatorial situation of communication," and argues that

[51] Donald T. Siebert, Jr., "The Scholar as Satirist: Johnson's Edition of Shakespeare," *SEL* (1975): 486.

an understanding of this complex situation makes common assumptions about the audience and ethos of the Preface, and even the aims of the *Dictionary*, untenable.[52]

I. Johnson's Proud Folio: The Material and Rhetorical Contexts of the Preface

In William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Becky Sharp tosses Johnson's "Dixionary" out of the coach window as she leaves Miss Pinkerton's academy. But the dictionary Miss Sharp tosses out of the window is not the same one most critics refer to when they discuss "Johnson's *Dictionary*." As Clifford points out, Becky's copy cost "only two-and-ninepence," and was probably an octavo edition.[53] Most critics, however, refer to Johnson's folio *Dictionary*, a large and expensive work published in two weighty volumes. Becky Sharp would not easily have "flung" a folio edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* through the coach window—she would have had to heave each ponderous volume one by one, providing that the massive folios could fit through the coach window at all.[54] Of course, what is more to the point for Thackeray and his readers is that Becky rejects what Johnson's *Dictionary* represents. For Thackeray, Johnson's *Dictionary*, almost a century after its initial publication, became an efficient, potent icon of institutional authoritarianism—a symbol against which Thackeray could characterize Becky as an impious and impetuous girl. The fact that Becky's *Dictionary* and the

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[52] *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1987]), Ch. 8, "The Prefatorial Situation of Communication." I do not depend on Genette's classification scheme, but am indebted throughout to his account of the forms and functions of a work's *paratextual elements*—all those elements of a book which exist on the threshold of a work and which are "at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it," 2.
[53] Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson,* 145.
[54] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. James Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1847-48]), 10.

scholar's *Dictionary* are often not distinguished suggests that the work's status as a cultural icon has overshadowed significant details of its material circulation. Johnson's *Dictionary* was published in various editions, and in various formats, over a long period of time. So when we talk about Johnson's *Dictionary*, we use a single term to refer to many, sometimes quite different, texts. As these texts were printed, bound, and distributed throughout England and beyond, "Johnson's *Dictionary*" became a shorthand term for the authoritative, institutional symbol it appears to be in *Vanity Fair*, regardless of size or format.[55] And just as "Johnson's *Dictionary*" became a shorthand term for the authoritative, institutional symbol it appears to be in *Vanity Fair*, "Dr. Johnson" came to stand as a symbol of authority, to be obeyed or flouted.

But when Johnson compiled his *Dictionary* and wrote its now famous Preface he was not the authoritative Doctor but a man whose public authority rested significantly on his powers of self-representation.[56] If we look past our inherited authoritarian image of "The Doctor" we will be reminded that Johnson compiled his *Dictionary* and wrote its framing, mediating text, the Preface, as a man who still needed to negotiate carefully his own authority in a contentious literary marketplace. The Preface was not just a

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[55] This shorthand term is, of course, necessary and convenient. In this portion of this chapter, my own references to the *Dictionary* and its Preface are, unless otherwise noted, to the 1755 first edition folio.

[56] Boswell records a note by Bennett Langton *fils* which claims that Johnson "did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of ten pounds" but that this was an "inconsiderable" sum; *Life*, I, 261 n. 3. J. D. Fleeman, citing this note in his examination of Johnson's literary earnings, lists this receipt of £10 as occurring in August 1749. This date must be a misprint for 1747, given the item's place in Fleeman's chronological list, and given the Plan's publication date, which Fleeman lists as corresponding with the £10 gift. Fleeman does not provide evidence for this particular dating, but it seems to come from John Croker's note in Boswell's *Life*, cited by Fleeman, which claims, "No doubt they [the £10] had been given in 1747 as an acknowledgment of the compliment paid to Chesterfield in the *Plan*," *Life*, I, 262. See J. D. Fleeman, "The Revenue of a Writer: Samuel Johnson's Literary Earnings," in *Studies in the Book Trade in Honour of Graham Pollard*, ed. R. W. Hunt, I. G. Philip, and R. J. Roberts (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1975), 212.

methodological document meant to introduce a dictionary, but an easy-to-circulate marketing tool—a self-promotional document that Johnson viewed as both crucial to his work's reception and important to his own literary career. Johnson wrote the Preface, the first public document in which he directly addressed the public as himself, aware that it would be read by an international audience, and he used that opportunity to fashion a public ethos for himself. Though we generally encounter the Preface apart from its original material contexts, those contexts significantly shaped the way eighteenth-century writers and readers presented and received texts. To an extent that scholars have not duly acknowledged, Johnson adapted the rhetoric of his self-presentation not only to the material aspects of his book and its production, but also to the conditions of textual transmission and reception, and to his own tenuous authority in the literary marketplace. I will outline in this section the material factors—the format and size of the *Dictionary*, the circumstances of its production, and book reviewing practices of the mid eighteenth century—which constrained and shaped Johnson's most essential rhetorical choices about ethos and audience.

The very format and size of Johnson's *Dictionary*, as it became apparent to Johnson, helped shape his sense of the appropriate ethos and likely audience for his Preface. When Johnson first conceived his *Dictionary* for a congeries of booksellers in his 1746 "Scheme," he was free to imagine what it might contain and what audiences it might serve. But by the time he wrote his Preface eight years later, after starts and stops and methodological modifications, his *Dictionary* was no longer an object of his imagination, but a physical one of considerable physical bulk. His *Dictionary* manuscript

was complete or nearly so, and entries through GRATE had long since been printed.[57] The *Dictionary* Johnson imagined in the *Plan* as pleasing both "critic" and "learner," "philosopher" and "common workman" (Sig. A3^{r}), grew page by page into a work that was "vasta mole superbus," proud in its prodigious bulk, as Johnson described it just weeks before publication.[58] A book of such size, consisting of "two unwieldly volumes" as Johnson's friend Thomas Warton described them—announced its pretension and its impracticability.[59] It was big, presumptuous and costly—no *vade mecum* for the common reader's coat or dress pocket, but a pretentious and weighty tome for the genteel study.[60]

And while bibliographers have long cautioned that terms used to describe a book's format—folio, quarto, octavo—are not reliable indicators of a book's size, these terms signified for eighteenth-century book buyers much more than the relationship between the size of a leaf and the sheet of paper on which it was printed.[61] A book's format often connoted its level of seriousness or social pretence. The Earl of Chesterfield

[57] Sheets containing A to CARRY definition 21 were printed at the end of 1750; CARRY definition 22 to DAME 2 in May 1752; DAME 2 to GRATE in October 1753; see Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary,* 39, 59. Thomas Birch wrote to Philip Yorke on 21 September 1754 that the *Dictionary* was completed, except for the Grammar and History of the language, and considered the book's size notable: "It will be 100 sheets larger than Chamber's Cyclopaedia," B.L.Add.MS.35,398, f. 214v, cited in Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson*, 126; 331, n. 13.

[58] *Letters*, I, 100, from a letter to Thomas Warton (20 March 1755). I use Bruce Redford's translation of the Latin tag as "proud in its prodigious bulk." Redford notes that the phrase may allude to "Aeneid III. 656-57, 'vasta se mole moventum / pastorem Polyphemum': 'the great shepherd Polyphemus, moving his mighty bulk' (trans. H. R. Fairclough, Loeb ed.)", *Letters*, I, 100, n. 6.

[59] (19 April 1755) *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, ed. David Fairer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 43.

[60] Unless one counts the "very wide brown cloth great-coat" Johnson wore on his journey to Scotland. Boswell wrote that its pockets "might have almost held the two volumes of his folio dictionary," James Boswell, *The Journal of A Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961[1786]), 8.

[61] Ronald B. McKerrow notes, "These designations are not of much use as indications of size, for in quite early times one might measure nearly 50 per cent. more both in height and width than another and yet they might both be 'octavo'," *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1928; New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1994), 164. Gérard Genette writes that while the "manner of folding. . . did not by itself indicate the flat dimensions of a book," it "quickly became a shorthand way of estimating" their size, seriousness, and claims to prestige (Genette, *Paratexts*), 17.

joked with the Bishop of Waterford that "Solid *folios* are the people of business, with whom I converse in the morning. *Quartos* (not *quarts*, pardon the quibble) are the easier mixed company, with whom I sit after dinner; and I pass my evenings in the light, and often frivolous, *chit-chat* of small *octavos* and *duodecimos*."[62] Joseph Addison suggests in *Spectator* 529 that a book's format loosely conferred status, or at least the presumption of it, on the part of some authors:

> The Author of a *Folio*, in all Companies and Conversations, sets himself above the Author of a *Quarto*; the Author of an *Octavo*; and so on, by a gradual Descent and Subordination, to an Author in *Twenty-Fours*. This Distinction is so well observed, that in an Assembly of the Learned, I have seen a *Folio* Writer place himself in an Elbow-chair, when the Author of a *Duo-decimo* has, out of a just Deference to his superior Quality, seated himself upon a Squabb. In a Word, Authors are usually ranged in Company after the same manner as their Works are upon a Shelf.[63]

Magazine readers who browsed the *Gentleman's Magazine*'s monthly list of books published, advertisements in *The Public Advertiser*, or book reviews in *The Monthly Review* could often find a book's format listed, along with other significant details: the price, number of volumes, the bookseller, and the author's academic credentials, if any.[64] On the front page of *The Public Advertiser* for 17 March 1755, an advertisement for Johnson's *Dictionary* lists its material features first, noting that it will be published "In Two Large VOLUMES in FOLIO." Sale catalogues categorized books for sale according to format, and even "shelving protocol" in circulating libraries involved placing more

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[62] (22 November 1757) Letter No. 2031 in *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, 6 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1932), V, 2265. Emphasis in original.
[63] (6 November 1712) *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), IV, 386. Emphasis in original.
[64] *The Gentleman's Magazine* is not consistent in listing a work's format. This may be because many of the "books" listed are sixpence pamphlets and tracts or modest one-shilling works whose price, along with the title, author, and publisher, may have helped convey the relative prestige of the work.

expensive folios on the high shelves, out of reach of the merely casual browser.[65] In his proposals for the *Harleian Miscellany* Johnson wrote of the intellectual respect given to folios, simply for their size.

> It has long been lamented, that the Duration of the Monuments of Genius and Study, as well as of Wealth and Power, depend in no small Measure on their Bulk; and that Volumes, considerable only for their Size, are handed down from one Age to another, when compendious Treatises, of far greater Importance, are suffered to perish, as the compactest Bodies sink into Water, while those, of which the Extension bears a greater Proportion to the Weight, float upon the Surface.[66]

As material objects in an expanding consumer culture, books connoted status, and different formats were loosely accorded different levels of intellectual and social status. These material features of eighteenth-century books, and their symbolic resonance, were basic to the experience of eighteenth-century booksellers and buyers, and contributed significantly to how books were marketed and perceived. Unless Johnson knew in advance that his expensive folio would later be sold in less expensive installments, and even later be heavily abridged for a 10-shilling octavo, these most basic features of his book limited the buying audience for his *Dictionary*, and were fundamental constraints on his sense of how to present himself and his work to the public. Johnson's initial vision of a dictionary that would meet the needs of the philosopher and the common workman must have been tempered by his awareness, over seven years later, and as his work neared publication, that his Dictionary would be a bulky, and thus costly, folio. As a

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[65] Edward H. Jacobs, "Buying into Classes: The Practice of Book Selection in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (1999-2000): 57.
[66] "An Account of the Undertaking" [*Proposals* for the *Harleian Miscellany* (1744)], in *Samuel Johnson's Prefaces and Dedications*, ed. Allen T. Hazen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 51.

result, his primary, purchasing audience would not be made up of common readers but the folio-buying set.

It is certainly not clear when Johnson would have reevaluated his sense of audience for the *Dictionary* and the Preface, but scholars have not addressed the extent to which the sheer bulk of his text would have made it clear to Johnson that his *Dictionary* would not likely be thumbed by the common reader, much less the workman. Although these book buyers were a staple audience of monolingual English dictionaries since their first appearance in 1604, neither they nor another common user of dictionaries, the student, constitute a key part of Johnson's sense of audience by the time he wrote the Preface. Robert DeMaria, Jr. has often emphasized that the *Dictionary* has an "educational mission," that it is "a book designed to be read by learners."[67] Anne McDermott, editor of the CD-ROM version of the *Dictionary*, quotes the 1747 *Plan* to reinforce this point, noting that "Johnson was always more concerned to instruct the learner than to delight the critic."[68] Johnson does, in fact, mention one group of students explicitly in the Preface—foreign "students of our language" (Sig. B^{v}). Yet while it is reasonable to say that Johnson was concerned about the needs of learners, or to say, as DeMaria does, that his audience could have included "young people," or that that he attempted to give the *Dictionary* "a moral and religious bent that he felt was appropriate for the instruction of students," Johnson's *Dictionary* was *not* primarily aimed at students, who had always formed a key audience for the numerous English dictionaries of

[67] Robert DeMaria, Jr., "Johnson's *Dictionary*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 88.
[68] Booklet accompanying Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM: The First and Fourth Editions*, ed. Anne McDermott, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

the "hard word" tradition before Johnson.[69] Until 1756, when it was made available in the much more affordable 10-shilling octavo, the *Dictionary* was, by and large, inaccessible to this traditional audience, unless they had fairly well-to-do parents or instructors.

In Johnson's Preface to the octavo abridgment, he contrasts the pretences and prestige of his folio with the works of his predecessors, who courted the more humble and less discriminating traditional dictionary audience. Monolingual English dictionaries had long attracted readers who were assumed to lack skill. The title page of Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall* (1604), printed in small octavo, states that its words have been "gathered for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other vnskillful persons."[70] Over a century later, the title-page of Nathan Bailey's octavo *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721) states that the work was "compil'd and Methodically digested, as well as for the Entertainment of the Curious, as the Information of the Ignorant, and for the Benefit of young Students, Artificers, Tradesmen and Foreigners who are desirous thorowly to understand what they Speak, Read, or Write."[71] By contrast, Johnson's octavo Preface, written after he received an honorary Oxford degree, and presumably after the folio had been publicly praised by the likes of Marquis Nicolini, president of Italy's Accademia della Crusca, states that his folio, "a dictionary like those compiled by the academies of Italy or France," was published "for the use of such as aspire to exactness of criticism or elegance of style." But "it has been since considered that works of that kind are by no means necessary to the greater number

[69] DeMaria, Jr., "Johnson's *Dictionary*," 91.
[70] Facsimile reprint in R. C. Alston, *A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800* (Leeds: E. J. Arnold & Sons, 1966), V, Plate IA.
[71] Facsimile reprint in *Bibliography of the English Language*, V, Plate XIIA.

of readers, who, seldom intending to write or presuming to judge, turn over books only to amuse their leisure, and to gain degrees of knowledge suitable to lower characters, or necessary to the common business of life."[72] In this octavo Preface Johnson underscores the difference between himself and previous lexicographers, some of whom "wanted industry and others literature: some knew not their own defects, and others were too idle to supply them."[73] These lexicographers were, presumably, the "humble drudges" with whom Johnson contrasted himself, more artfully, in the folio Preface. Johnson's folio Preface, introducing a work so proud in its bulk, was aimed at a more pretentious audience—if for no other reason than that it generally contained the literati who would ultimately judge its success. The common reader was, at least initially, priced out of the ability to judge.

The question of how Johnson saw his aims and audience is, of course, complex; but while it has been commonplace to say that if Johnson revised his expectations of what lexicographers might do for the language between the *Plan* and Preface, it is almost never said that Johnson must have modified his fundamental notion of audience, once the *Dictionary* was no longer an imagined text. In any case, any discussion of Johnson's aims as a lexicographer must probably include comments and sentiments from both the *Plan* and the Preface, since the entries of the *Dictionary*, compiled over several years, probably contain evidence of the more ambitious Johnson of the *Plan* and the Johnson who, in the

[72] Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language....Abstracted from the FOLIO EDITION*, 2nd ed., corrected, 2 vols. (London, 1760); hereafter referred to as Octavo Preface. Nicolini's praise of the *Dictionary* was announced in *The Public Advertiser* (10 October 1755); see Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 110-111, 230 n. 22.
[73] Octavo Preface.

Preface, presents himself as chastened by experience. Nonetheless, it is important to pay keen attention to Johnson's strikingly different rhetorical circumstances in each case.

If the size and format helped shape Johnson's sense of ethos and audience, his awareness of circumstances surrounding his text's production—the highly detailed nature of his work, as well as his knowledge of his working habits—helped shape the character of the Preface as an apologia. "Every writer of a long work commits errours," Johnson notes in the Preface, and in the Preface Johnson is discussing material which, in some cases, he handed over to his printer over three years before (Sig. B2^{v}).[74] The Preface recounts highly detailed work of over eight years, well over two thousand pages, and over forty thousand entries.[75] "No work of such multiplicity," Johnson writes, "was ever free" of "a few wild blunders and risible absurdities" (Sig. C2^{v}). Perhaps not having had much opportunity to edit the *Dictionary* closely before publication, Johnson had quite practical motives for extenuating faults, knowing more than anyone the extent to which the *Dictionary* was subject to human error. Both the sheer extent of detail in the *Dictionary* and the fact that this detailed work was done over several years with the assistance of amanuenses meant that Johnson was in some cases extenuating errors he may have suspected, rather than known. The account book of Johnson's printer, William Strahan, shows that at some point in 1753 Johnson began "producing copy faster than it was being printed." Although Strahan did charge the *Dictionary*'s publishers for "Alterations and

[74] In December of 1750 the *Dictionary*'s printer, William Strahan,, "recorded (and charged the investing booksellers) for printing the first 70 sheets…encompassing the text through the twenty-first sense of the word CARRY;" *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 59. Sledd and Kolb point out that some evidence from Strahan's ledgers points to 1749, but they explain why the 1750 dating is preferable; *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 107.
[75] Anne McDermott records the 1755 first edition folio as containing 42,773 entries; booklet accompanying *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM*, 7.

Additions" in the *Dictionary*, it is not clear how much time Johnson had to review the text that he was producing with significantly increased speed from 1753.[76] Anne McDermott has pointed out that some entries under the letter T are "badly out of alphabetical order (thus: TOPSAIL followed by TOPARCH, etc.)."[77] There is no way to know for sure, but Johnson may have suspected that his massive *Dictionary* contained more errors or infelicities than he could ever catch before handing over the last portions of his manuscript to his printer. We do know that Johnson suggests as much in a letter he wrote to Charles Burney a week before the *Dictionary* was published: "If you find faults, I shall endeavor to mend them; if you find none, I shall think you blinded by kind partiality."[78] Many years later Johnson wrote that "the writer of a Dictionary may silently omit what he does not know; and his ignorance, if it happens to be discovered, slips away from censure under the name of forgetfulness."[79] Johnson's sense in the folio Preface of his own limitations is figured masterfully as just what sublunary creatures must expect, given their condition, but his knowledge of the very concrete material conditions of textual production, especially when the text to be produced is so large and intricate, would have given him reason to conduct preemptive strikes against his own errors, so he could attribute them to mortal fallibility before others might characterize them as due to a lack of skill or negligence.

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[76] See *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 72. Citing "Strahan's account book BM MS 48803 (A), p. 23," Reddick argues that the £123.11s. charged for the alterations "suggests that Johnson must have gone closely over the printed text and not hesitated to change it if he felt it needed alteration"; *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary,"* 82, 215 n. 86.
[77] Booklet accompanying *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM*, 10.
[78] *Letters*, I, 103.
[79] Preface to Alexander Macbean's *Dictionary of Ancient Geography* (London, 1773), quoted in Hazen, *Prefaces and Dedications*, 135.

In addition to the circumstances of his text's production, Johnson would have considered the ways in which his Preface would circulate among book reviews and magazines, which tended to excerpt substantial portions of featured or reviewed books. Thus while Johnson was aware that the price of his folio put it out of the reach of most consumers, he still had every reason to expect that substantial portions of his Preface would reach a wide, even international audience—his own *Rambler* essays, his play *Irene*, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* had all been excerpted or abstracted in *Gentleman's Magazine*. So he must have considered the Preface as crucial to both his future literary reputation and the success or failure of the *Dictionary*. As books increased in number, bringing about what Johnson called an "epidemical conspiracy for the destruction of paper," such Prefaces could serve as useful marketing tools, and as demonstrations of a writer's knowledge and qualifications.[80] As such, they were equally useful to bookseller, author, and the serious book browser who was looking to buy—especially in the mid eighteenth century, when book reviewing in England began to develop as a genre in its own right. In any case, a work without a Preface would make its entrance upon the world awkwardly, especially if it were a large pretentious folio like the *Dictionary*, which, as a reference work purporting to differ from previous works, was also in Johnson's case a work whose contents may have undershot the targets he set for it in the *Plan*. These considerations clarify the potential stakes involved for Johnson as he wrote the Preface: it is likely that in writing the Preface Johnson expected a large stage on

[80] *Adventurer* 115 (11 December 1753), in *The Idler* and *The Adventurer*, ed. W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt and L. F. Powell, vol. II of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 458. All *Adventurer* and *Idler* citations refer to this edition.

which to display his knowledge and qualifications, and he wrote with full knowledge of the extent to which such a document, circulated widely through magazines and the *Monthly Review*, might thereby distinguish him as an eminent man of learning.

As Johnson was working on the *Dictionary*, the genre of the literary review was developing as a mechanism by which these prefaces were disseminated, and through which they were often filtered, to the increasingly large and heterogeneous reading public. The periodical market, spurred by Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* as well as the energetic efforts of Scottish and Irish print piracy, had helped to develop the provincial English book trade and enlarged the size and geographical distribution of the British reading public.[81] In the mid eighteenth century, booksellers aware of the expanding market for books regularly used advertisements and "puffs" to reach large magazine and newspaper audiences.[82] In May 1749 England's first successful periodical dedicated entirely to reviewing new books for the general reader, the *Monthly Review*, first appeared as Johnson was working on his *Dictionary*, noting that "the abuse of title-pages is obviously come to such a pass, that few readers care to take in a book, any more than a servant, without a recommendation."[83] Perhaps in response, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, as early as August 1750, began including occasional commentary in its

[81] John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 77-78.
[82] Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 100-101.
[83] "Advertisement" to the first number of the *Monthly Review*, quoted in Antonia Forster, Introduction to *Index to Book Reviews in England 1749-1774* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 4. Forster notes that the "Advertisement" is "bound following the table of contents at the beginning of volume I of the *Monthly Review* in the Bodleian Library's copy. . . but is bound at the end of the first number, i.e., between pages 80 and 81, in the British Library's copy and the copy in the State Library of Victoria," 15 n. 4. Forster's Introduction, 3-18, is a useful overview of the development of book reviews during this period in England.

monthly list of works published.[84] Johnson, a longtime writer for the *Gentleman's*, which he described in 1754, as "one of the most successful and lucrative pamphlets which literary history has upon record," would have been aware of its potential as source of publicity, generally through its inclusion of "specimens" of new works; it included the "PLAN and SPECIMENS" of his play *Irene* in February 1749 and it reprinted, whole or in part, 25 of his *Rambler* essays.[85]

Johnson also would have been familiar with the method of reviewing employed by the *Monthly Review*, what Antonia Forster has described as the "abstract/extract

[84] This observation comes from my own examination of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. James G. Basker cites March 1751 as the beginning of this practice. See Basker, *Tobias Smollett, Critic and Journalist*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 170; quoted also in Frank Donoghue, "Colonizing Readers: Review Criticism and the Formation of a Reading Public," *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 58. Antonia Forster claims that the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *London Magazine* did not include lengthy reviews as a regular feature until the 1760s: "Even before the birth of the *Monthly Review* the *Gentleman's* makes the occasional very brief comment on a new publication, and this continues until December 1750 when its booklist, a regular feature since the magazines beginning in 1731, is for the first time described in the table of contents as 'Books and pamphlets with remarks.' Only a few items in the booklist do have 'remarks,' and these are rarely more than a few words; this area of literary endeavor remains of very minor interest until 1765, with, sometimes, a whole year passing without any comments at all. Then in April 1765, when the importance of reviewing can no longer be questioned, the *Gentleman's* begins an expanded review section. . . . It is in June 1767 that the *London Magazine*. . . makes a formal beginning of larger scale reviewing," *Index to Book Reviews in England*, 12-13.

[85] Johnson's description of the *Gentleman's Magazine* appears in its own pages, in Johnson's unsigned obituary of its founder, Edward Cave, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 24 (February 1754), 57. The "PLAN *and* SPECIMENS" of *Irene* appear in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 19 (February 1749), 76-81. My own examination of the *Gentleman's Magazine* found that between March 1750 and March 1752, the duration of the *Rambler*'s existence, 19 out of 26 monthly issues of *The Gentleman's Magazine* reprinted, or significantly excerpted, 25 of the 208 total *Ramblers*: *Rambler* 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 22, 33, 42, 54, 60, 67, 79, 83, 91, 107, 130, 133, 151, 161, 186, 187, 191, 197, 198, 208. *Rambler* 186 and 187 were reprinted in the 1751 Supplement. The September 1750 issue (406-08) contains "*The* MOTTOES *and other Passages in the* RAMBLER" for nos. 1 to 29, and the October 1752 issue (468-70) contains "*The* Subjects, Mottoes, *and other* Citations *in the* RAMBLER" for *Ramblers* 30-57. Edward Cave acquired the copyright for the *Ramblers* on 1 April 1751. For a facsimile of the contract see Hugh Amory, "Johnson's Copies, 1744-1784," (Cambridge, Mass.: For the Johnsonians, 1984). I thank Michael Winship for this reference, and Rachel Howarth of the Houghton Library for helping me locate the article. The *Gentleman's Magazine* acknowledged its special interest in the *Ramblers*, reprinting praise of the *Rambler* from "an ingenious and disinterested writer," since "many, who know the *Ramblers* are sent into the World from St. John's Gate [the magazine's office], would have paid little Regard to our Encomium and Recommendation," *Gentleman's Magazine*, 20 (October 1750), 465.

method," a method he would himself later employ in the *Literary Magazine*.[86] The abstract/extract method used by reviewers of the time usually entailed much less of the reviewer's critical opinion than is now expected, and relied more on summary and quotation.[87] If Johnson expected any regard from the *Monthly Review* or magazines with wide circulation, he would have been right to expect that regard to take the form, largely, of summary and quotation—both from the body of the *Dictionary*, and from the Preface that would introduce its contents. And in fact, this is what generally did happen when the *Dictionary* was reviewed (or abstracted) upon publication.[88] Scholars must be careful when consulting these reviews because the lack of explicit quotation marks does not

[86] See her *Index to Book Reviews in England*, 5. For a summary of Johnson's involvement with the *Literary Magazine*, see Donald D. Eddy, *Samuel Johnson, Book Reviewer in the Literary Magazine, or Universal Review, 1756-1758* (New York & London: Garland, 1979), ch. 1. For Johnson's methods as a reviewer, see Eddy, ch. 3.

[87] See Eddy, *Samuel Johnson as Book Reviewer*, 89. Two articles have focused on reviews of Johnson's *Dictionary*: Stanley Rypins, "Johnson's Dictionary Reviewed by His Contemporaries," *Philological Quarterly* 4 (1925): 281-86, and Gertrude E. Noyes, "The Critical Reception of Johnson's *Dictionary* in the Latter Eighteenth Century," *Modern Philology* 52 (1954-55): 175-91. Both scholars cover a period of nearly fifty years, yet neither article mentions the nascent state of reviewing at mid-century, which is crucial to understanding the reviewing context of which Johnson would have been aware when writing the Preface. Despite this caveat, the Noyes article is valuable as a survey of eighteenth-century published responses to the *Dictionary*.

[88] I have examined reviews in the *Edinburgh Review*, as reprinted in *Scots Magazine* 17 (November 1755), 539-44; *Gentleman's Magazine* 25 (April 1755), 147-51; *London Magazine*, 24 (April 1755), 193-200; *Monthly Review* 12 (April 1755), 292-324; and *Scots Magazine* 17 (April 1755), 177-85. Of these reviews, only the *Edinburgh Review*, written by Adam Smith, and to a lesser extent the account in the *Monthly Review*, give much place to the reviewer's own commentary. The *Scots Magazine* review excerpts brief material from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but is generally an abbreviated version of the *Monthly Review* account—an abridgment, not simply a reprint, as Sledd and Kolb suggest; *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary,* 145. The *London Magazine* review excerpts the Preface and the entry for 'To BEAR v.a.' Sledd and Kolb also note that reviews "appeared, at various times in 1755 and 1756," in the *Bibliothèque des savans* and the *Bibliothèque des sciences et des beaux arts*, as well as the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, the *Journal britannique*, the *Journal étranger*, and the *Magazine of Magazines* (Limerick), see Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary,* 145. Helen Louise McGuffie lists the *Magazine of Magazines* review (April 1755, 289-94) and *Gentleman's and London Magazine* (Dublin, April 1755, 263-68) as repeating the *Gentleman's Magazine* review, and lists June 1755 as the date of the *Edinburgh Review*'s account of the *Dictionary* in *Samuel Johnson in the British Press, 1749-1784: A Chronological Checklist* (New York & London: Garland, 1976), 15-16. The *European Magazine*, (Vol. 61, 249-54) also reprinted the *Edinburgh Review* account, according to Gertrude E. Noyes,"The Critical Reception of Johnson's *Dictionary*, 178 n. 8.

mean that the reviewer is not quoting, or paraphrasing closely, the author being reviewed. For instance, Johnson's Preface reads

> Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, *I applied myself* to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees*, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me*. (Sig. A2^{v}; emphasis added)

The *Gentleman's Magazine*, in its "account" of the *Dictionary*, continues to quote Johnson profusely, even when the writer of the account stops using quotation marks:

> Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, *he applied himself* to the perusal of our writers, and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, *he reduced to method, by such rules as experience and analogy suggested in the progress of the work*.[89]

Given the abstract/extract method, as Forster terms it, writers of significant works at mid century might expect that their works, or at least prefaces meant to attract regard, would be significantly excerpted. Because such reviewing practices made limited portions of the Preface and the *Dictionary* accessible to more than the purchasing audience, Johnson was inclined to expect, weeks before publication, that his vast and expensive tome "must stand the censures of *the great vulgar and small*, of those that understand it and

[89] *Gentleman's Magazine* 25 (April 1755), 147; emphasis added. Nicholas Hudson quotes another passage from this review of the *Dictionary* as evidence for the opinion of the reviewer, whom he identifies as Johnson's friend John Hawkesworth (as does Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary,* 83), but Hudson fails to note that Hawkesworth is actually paraphrasing Johnson; what's more, Hawkesworth is paraphrasing the 1747 *Plan*, which I argue was written before Johnson had clarified his sense of his who would actually be able to buy the *Dictionary*. See Hudson, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and the Politics of 'Standard English,'" *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 85; Hudson uses the same quote to make the same point in "Discourse of Transition: Johnson, the 1750s, and the Rise of the Middle Class," *Age of Johnson* 13 (2002): 38. Hawkesworth's close paraphrasing on the passage cited above moves without announcement, and without quotation marks, from the Preface in one paragraph, to the *Plan* in the next. Hawkesworth would have had easy enough access to the 1747 *Plan*, which was made available gratis in late February 1755. For information about the reprinting of the *Plan* and advertisements for its availability, see Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary,* 82, 110, 220 nn. 133 and 136, and 230 n. 20.

understand it not."[90] Two years later, Johnson complained about the fact that his own self-criticisms circulated beyond even those who had read the Preface, writing that "upon the publication of my book" there "were only two who . . . did not endeavour to depress me with with threats of censure from the publick, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface."[91]

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In the world of eighteenth-century letters prefatory materials, or preliminaries, are crucial to a work's reception. They are highly conspicuous vehicles for authorial self-fashioning, and when placed at the head of an especially ambitious work, they also function as authorial outlays of symbolic cultural capital.[92] The more capital one has to display, the more authority one can obtain on credit from readers; and in works seeking cultural authority, these outlays are more crucial than they are in other books. In an ambitious work like Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia*, a list of subscribers and a dedication can suggest that Chambers's project is not merely written for profit, but for the public good. If the list of subscribers provides a public list of presumedly disinterested personal references, the dedication allows one to present the author's aspirations and achievements as an ambition to please or glorify the dedicatee.[93] So these prefatory materials partly function as means by which authors participating in print capitalism can

[90] *Letters*, I, 101 (25 March 1755); emphasis in original. Bruce Redford notes that Johnson is quoting from Abraham Cowley's imitation of Horace's "Odi profanum vulgus" ode (III.1): "Hence, ye Profane; I hate ye all; / Both the Great, Vulgar, and the Small" (lines 1-2). See *Letters*, I, 101 n. 6.
[91] *Letters*, I, 157.
[92] I am indebted throughout to Dustin Griffin's discussion of the "cultural economics of literary patronage" in *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 2.
[93] Richard Yeo discusses why encyclopedias might be dedicated to kings at a time when "a bookseller no longer needed a privilege or licence, granted by the king, in order to protect his book from piracy," in *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 222-45.

avoid the taint of having their work viewed as vitiated by vanity or self-interest. Because Johnson knew his *Dictionary* would lack these legitimizing preliminaries, and perhaps because he wrote the Preface before obtaining his first academic degree, he could not so much outlay symbolic capital as document the evidence and value of his intellectual labors. And if Johnson's awareness of the *Dictionary*'s possible errors required tactics of a proleptic apologia, the need to praise the value of his work also required self-panegyric.

Johnson was eminently aware of the realities of textual reception in his day, and because of this he would have considered the Preface essential to his work's successful reception. In *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift's endlessly digressive narrator complains that a work's front matter, while often ignored, was often read as a substitute for the text that it introduced, writing that "it is lamentable to behold, with what a lazy Scorn, many of the yawning Readers in our Age, do now a-days twirl over forty or fifty Pages of *Preface* and *Dedication*, . . . as if it were so much *Latin*. Tho' it must be also allowed on the other Hand that a very considerable Number is known to proceed *Criticks* and *Wits*, by reading nothing else. Into which two Factions, I think, all present Readers may justly be divided."[94] Notwithstanding Swift's satiric reduction, a third class of readers, as well as the writers and booksellers who courted them, used textual preliminaries as a way to situate texts socially, to establish the knowledge and qualifications of the author, and to determine the worthiness of a book for purchase. The eighteenth-century book, unarmed with the summaries and endorsements found on the covers or dust jackets of modern

[94] Jonathan Swift, Section V, "A Digression in the Modern Kind," *A Tale of a Tub*. *A Tale of a Tub with Other Early Works: 1696-1707*, ed. Herbert Davis, vol. I of *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939 [1704]), 82; emphasis in original.

books, was often unbound, so the front matter of the text—title page, frontispiece, dedication, list of subscribers, preface—served to authorize the text, situate the author and work both socially and intellectually, and to attract potential readers.

Johnson himself suggested years later that a preface was—in ways that we now perhaps underestimate—essential to a work's reception. Writing of a late seventeenth-century collection of modern Latin poetry, Johnson notes that the collection was published by a London man who "concealed his name, but whom his Preface shews to have been well qualified for his undertaking." But when Pope later reissued the collection with some additional collections he "injuriously omitted his predecessor's preface. To these books, which had nothing but the mere text, no regard was paid; the authors were still neglected, and the editor was neither praised nor censured."[95] The "mere text" itself was not sufficient if a work were to receive any regard. Eighteenth-century French novelist Pierre Marivaux, protesting against the "burden of writing a preface," admits perhaps playfully that "a preface is necessary: a book printed and bound without a preface—is it a book? No, without a doubt, it does not yet deserve that name; it is a sort of book, a book without proper authorization . . . an applicant, aspiring to become a book, and only when vested with this last formality is it worthy to truly bear that name."[96] The eighteenth-century preface functioned in the growing, socially disconnected world of the reading public like a petition for favor—it introduced the author's credentials to a potential reader, who then decided to engage or pass by potential suitors to their time,

[95] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), III, 183. This edition is hereafter cited as *Lives*.
[96] Preface to *La Voiture embourbée*, quoted in Genette, *Paratexts*, 231.

attention, and regard. When accompanied by other common preliminaries—the dedication, or the list of subscribers, and in the case of dictionaries, a grammar and brief history of the language—a preface allowed authors to display the knowledge or qualifications already implicitly vouched for by patrons, subscribers, or even the good reputation of a bookseller.

Given the special nature of dictionaries as works to be consulted not read, Johnson could easily have suspected that his Preface would carry as much weight with readers and reviewers as the text itself. Because a dictionary is really not expected to be read cover to cover, its preface is crucial to shaping how readers understand it. The relationship between preface and text in a dictionary thus differs from the relationship between a preface and a text meant to be read through. Generally, the body of a text read straight through gradually overshadows its preface, as a play eclipses its prologue. But in a dictionary, most readers only ever experience a small portion of the bulk of the text. Only through repeated and continued use of a dictionary can one's experience of the text overshadow the shaping frame of the preface. The reviewer of Johnson's *Dictionary* in *The Monthly Review* apologized to readers for

> the short time we have allowed ourselves for the consideration of so extensive a performance. It is not to be supposed that in the few days elapsed since the publication of these large volumes, we could peruse the whole, or even so large a portion of them, as might serve to justify a *critical* detail; . . . we . . . have chose to let Mr. *Johnson* speak for himself; contenting ourselves with having endeavoured to elucidate his declared intention, by correspondent specimens of his performance.[97]

[97] *The Monthly Review* 12 (April 1755), 324.

Of course, no one has to read a preface, and modern dictionary users, taking the layout of a dictionary and the structure of entries for granted, routinely ignore a dictionary's preface, going instead straight for the definition they seek. But in "this age of dictionaries," when, as Johnson put it in the *Plan*, the term "dictionary" had "long conveyed a very miscellaneous idea," and in a work meant to be the first authoritative dictionary of English, readers would have an incentive to read the Preface, which was not merely an operator's manual, defense of methodological principles, and overview of its contents, but also testimony to the compiler's abilities and authority.[98] Contemporary reviews of the *Dictionary* point out the value attributed to the Preface in demonstrating the worth of the *Dictionary*'s contents. The *Gentleman's Magazine* proclaims that the Preface "will be found an indubitable testimony of [the *Dictionary*'s] worth."[99] The *London Magazine* notes that "extracts from his preface will best shew the nature of his work, and the difficulties of its execution: and will give to the public the truest ideas of its merits, and its imperfections."[100] And given Johnson's condition when writing the Preface—lacking a degree, a patron, or any other traditional legitimizing authority—he would have to establish the merits of his vast, now completed work, to a large extent, on the merits of the Preface, in which Johnson would have to present himself and his work to the public.

Though prefaces were crucial mediators between readers and "the mere text" of a dictionary, readers would expect more than a mere Preface—more even than the expected

[98] *Letters*, I, 79; *Plan*, (Sig. A3[r]).
[99] *Gentleman's Magazine* 25 (April, 1755), 150.
[100] *London Magazine* 24 (April 1755), 193.

grammar and history of the language, in the *Dictionary* that Johnson was presenting to the public—a nationally significant dictionary modeled on continental academic dictionaries. Scholarly folios, even when underwritten by booksellers, often began with culturally legitimizing preliminaries—that is, dedications or lists of subscribers. The *Dictionnaire* of the French Academy, aside from its authority as a state-sanctioned institution, notes on the title page that it is "*DEDIÉ AU ROY*."[101] Robert Ainsworth's *Thesaurus Linguæ Latinæ*, one of Johnson's sources, includes, among other preliminaries, a Latin dedication to "Doctissimo Viro RICHARDO MEAD GEORGII II, *Magnæ Britanniæ* Regis," Richard Mead, physician to the King; a letter to the "learned and lovers of pure Latinity" (Eruditis et puræ Latinitatis amatoribus); and a Preface.[102] Dr. Robert James's folio *Medicinal Dictionary* (1742) contains a dedication to Dr. Mead ghostwritten by Johnson.[103] The *Cyclopædia*, whose author Ephraim Chambers is often cited as a model for Johnson's style, contains two legitimizing paratexts, in addition to its Preface: a dedication "TO THE KING," and a list of subscribers which includes earls, knights, lords, and fellows of the Royal Society.[104] Such authorizing preliminaries granted these authors and lexicographers the cachet of aristocratic approval and gave subscribers and patrons publicity for their contribution to the greater good. Thus the burden for Chambers of introducing and legitimizing the *Cyclopædia* does not rest

[101] *Le Dictionnaire de L'Académie Françoise, Dedié au Roy*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1694).
[102] Robert Ainsworth, *Thesaurus Linguæ Latinæ compendarius* (London, 1736).
[103] Hazen, *Prefaces and Dedications*, 73.
[104] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1728). The list also includes upwardly mobile printers, chemists, clockmakers, attorneys, and a "Mr. Michael Johnson of Litchfield" (Sig. h2^{v}). For the reputed influence of Chambers on Johnson's style, see Sledd and Kolb's discussion of this persistent tradition, which begins with Boswell's report of a comment Johnson made; *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 19-20.

primarily on his Preface, as it does with the *Dictionary*. But Johnson's *Dictionary*, despite its ambitions, would lack these elements, and thus rely by necessity on Johnson's ability to recommend the book himself.

The fact that Johnson's ambitious scholarly work would lack a dedication meant that in the Preface he would have to vouch for himself, and this was both socially and morally awkward for a number of reasons. First, Johnson would be presenting an ambitious scholarly work intended to be culturally authoritative but lacking even the implicit imprimatur of any culturally legitimizing institution, such as the monarchy, the peerage, a university, or a royally sanctioned academy. Moreover, because Johnson had dedicated the *Plan* of the *Dictionary* to Lord Chesterfield, the lack of a dedication to Chesterfield in the published *Dictionary* might open Johnson to the charge of ingratitude, a quality which one fictionalized correspondent to Mr. Rambler identified as a "frequently" and "justly censured" "depravity of the mind."[105] When Johnson wrote the Preface, the reading public would have little reason to suspect that he no longer regarded Chesterfield as his patron, even though Johnson himself had received no contact or

[105] *Rambler* 149 (20 August 1751) in *The Rambler*, ed. Walter Jackson Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, vols. III-V of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), V, 28. In fact, one contemporary reviewer of the *Dictionary* charged Johnson with neglecting his obligations to Chesterfield. Dr. Matthew Maty, a friend of Lord Chesterfield, expressed surprise that Johnson did not place the *Plan* at the head of the *Dictionary*, and suggested that its absence was an attempt on Johnson's part to conceal obligations to his patron: "On a lieu d'être surpris que cette pièce ne se trouve point à la tête du dictionnaire, dont elle contenoit l'annonce. Elle eût épargné à l'Auteur la composition d'une nouvelle preface, qui ne contient qu'en partie les mêmes choses, et qu'on est tenté de regarder comme destineé a faire perdre de vue quelques unes des obligations, que M. Johnson avoit contractées, et le Mécène qu'il avoit choisi." *Journal Britannique*, 17 (juillet et août 1755), quoted in A. De Morgan, "Dr. Johnson and Dr. Maty," *Notes and Queries*, 2nd series, IV (July-December, 1857): 341. De Morgan suggests that this review lay behind Johnson's reportedly heated response to the suggestion that Maty help him with a literary review: "The little black dog! I'd throw him into the Thames." See *Life*, I, 284. Boswell alters this quote from its form in his source for the anecdote, a letter (15 June 1784) from Dr. William Adams: "Damn Maty—little dirty-faced dog I'll throw him into the Thames." See *The Correspondence and Other Papers of James Boswell Relating to the Making of the 'Life of Johnson'*, 2nd ed., corrected and enlarged, ed. Marshall Waingrow (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 19, 21 nn. 18 and 19.

support from Chesterfield since 1747.[106] Johnson's letter to Chesterfield came later and was private, even though it may later have made the rounds of some London literati.[107] In part to explain the absence of a dedication, Johnson thus may have deemed it necessary to inform the public, to "gratify curiosity" in his words, that the *Dictionary* was "written. . . without any patronage of the great" (Sig. C2^{v}).

In addition, at a time when, in Mr. Rambler's words, to "commence author is to claim praise," to put oneself forward or to recommend one's own work risked immodesty and vanity, and violated classical and contemporary notions of decorum.[108] Cicero, in a

[106] Events transpiring after Johnson likely wrote the Preface reinforced the impression that Chesterfield was still Johnson's patron: Chesterfield's puffs of the *Dictionary* appeared in *The World* in November and December 1754; Johnson's *Plan*, dedicated to Chesterfield was made available for free in February or March 1755, if not earlier (Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 110, 220 n. 133). One correspondent to *The Scots Magazine* in February 1755 still believed that the *Dictionary* was "patronized by the Earl of Chesterfield, that living standard of true British eloquence," *Scots Magazine* 17 (February 1755), 91. In March 1755 *The London Magazine* printed a poem reinforcing Chesterfield's image as a generous patron: "On the intended Academy for the Encouragement of Genius, and the Establishment of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, &c. with the Arts depending." After asking if "genius" in Britain shall "perish in its infant state," the author exclaims, "Ye Chesterfields! ye Lytteltons, arise!" *London Magazine* 24 (March 1755), 136. In addition, a correspondent to the April 5 *Inspector* seems to refer to Johnson as still enjoying Chesterfield's patronage. "I should do injustice to one, who having in repeated instances shewn the force and elegance of our language, is at this time employed in the most laborious work, genius ever undertook, to establish it, if I should not add, that he early received the same honour [i.e., patronage from Chesterfield] with the first mentioned poet [listed simply as Jones], and continues to enjoy as much of the same patronage as he chuses to accept," reprinted in *London Magazine* 24 (April 1755), 166. This passage may be an indirect allusion to Johnson's letter to Chesterfield, but there is no way to be sure.

[107] Years later Johnson's friend, the Rev. William Adams, claimed in a letter to Boswell that the Chesterfield letter was "the talk of the town," and Dr. William Warburton apparently heard about the letter, but I have found nothing printed in 1755 that refers directly to the letter. For a possible indirect reference, see the previous note. It is not clear how much we can trust Adams's account—we have no way to know how widely or how quickly the contents of the letter or its message were circulated before the publication of the Preface made the rift between Chesterfield and Johnson clear. John J. Burke, Jr. identifies Isaac Reed's 1774 account of the rift in the *Westminster Magazine* as the "first account in print of the 1755 quarrel," "The Originality of Boswell's Version of Johnson's Quarrel with Lord Chesterfield," in *New Light on Boswell: Critical and Historical Essays on the Occasion of the Bicentenary of* The Life of Johnson, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 145.

[108] *Rambler* 93 (Yale *Works*, IV, 134).

text Johnson recommended for students of ethics and morality, noted that it "is bad taste . . . to talk about oneself."[109] David Hume, in a study of morals wrote,

> That impertinent, and almost universal propensity of men, to over-value themselves, has given us such a *prejudice* against self-applause, that we are apt to condemn it, by a *general rule*, wherever we meet with it; and 'tis with some difficulty we give a privilege to men of sense, even in their most secret thoughts. At least, it must be own'd, that some disguise in this particular is absolutely requisite; and that if we harbour pride in our breasts, we must carry a fair outside, and have the appearance of modesty and mutual deference in all our conduct and behaviour.[110]

As Mr. Rambler and as correspondent "T" of *The Adventurer*, Johnson advised "firmness and spirit" to authors, since "softness, diffidence and moderation will often be mistaken for imbecility and dejection;" the latter traits "lure cowardice to the attack by the hopes of easy victory, and it will be soon be found that he whom every man thinks he can conquer, shall never be at peace." But self-defence, especially when used to "secure" the writer from "unexpected encounters," could easily give way to self-praise, hence to vanity and error. Those who indulge their pride in defense of errors may find that "such pride, once indulged, too frequently operates upon more important objects, and inclines men not only to vindicate their errors, but their vices; to persist in practices which their own hearts condemn, only lest they should seem to feel reproaches, or be made wiser by the advice of others." And even though, as Mr. Rambler noted, Erasmus wrote that "It is right...that

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[109] Cicero, *De Officiis*, I. 38, trans. Walter Miller (London: William Heinemann, 1938), 141. Johnson recommends "*Tully's Offices*" in his anonymous Preface to *The Preceptor* (1748); see *Prefaces and Dedications*, 187.

[110] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978 [1739-40]), 598. Emphasis in original.

he, whom no one else will commend, should bestow commendations on himself," those self-praisers are merely the "happiest and greatest" of the "sons of vanity."[111]

Mid-eighteenth-century professional writers employed a variety of ways to avoid putting themselves forward, which could taint the value of their work if they appeared to be motivated by monetary gain. As John Brewer puts it, under a long-prevailing view of writing as "a 'liberal' pursuit, the occupation of persons of enlarged views and unbiased vision," writing for money

> not only reduced authorship to a mechanical trade but subverted the value of the work. Literature for profit could not be unsullied and unbiased. . . . In such a view all true authors aspired to the status of persons whose independent means freed their capacity for true judgment. It was therefore extremely important to deny or conceal any mercenary motive, to disavow and devise the temptations of mammon. . . . Contemporaries contrasted the genteel camp of 'liberal' writers, populated by men and women of large vision and good taste, with what they saw as the squalid and impecunious quarters inhabited by authors of partial vision, venal aspiration and grovelling subordination. In this view there was no intermediate niche between the liberal author and the Grub Street hack.[112]

Some writers of fiction avoided the stigma of vulgar professionalism by publishing anonymously, or writing what Genette has called the "disavowing authorial preface," in which the writer denies authorship of the text, often claiming to be simply the editor of a text composed by the narrator.[113] Samuel Richardson published his *Pamela* anonymously, and composed a "Preface by the Editor," in which he was confident that the work was worthy for two reasons: "Because he can Appeal from his own Passions, (which have been uncommonly moved in perusing these engaging Scenes) . . . ; And, in the next

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[111] Yale *Works*, V, 166; III, 171; V, 246. Mr. Rambler does not note that Erasmus conveyed this advice on self-praise through the voice of Folly. See Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, trans. Clarence H. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979 [1509]), 11.
[112] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 144-46.
[113] Genette, *Paratexts*, 185-87, 280-84.

place, because an Editor may be reasonably supposed to judge with an Impartiality which is rarely to be met with in an Author toward his own Works."[114] In addition to this disinterested editor's preface, the prefatory matter includes an anonymous letter first published in the *Weekly Miscellany*, addressed "*To my worthy Friend, the Editor of* PAMELA, &c." The correspondent closes by insisting that "the Cause of Virtue, calls for the Publication of such a Piece as this. Oblige then, Sir, the concurrent Voices of both Sexes, and give us Pamela for the Benefit of Mankind" (p. 8). Henry Fielding, in presenting *Tom Jones* to the public, did not publish anonymously, but did dedicate his work to "the HONORABLE George Lyttelton, *Esq*.," insisting on his "Right to desire your Protection of this Work" despite Lyttelton's "constant Refusal, when I have asked Leave to prefix your Name to this Dedication."[115] In discussing the merits of his work with Lyttelton, rather than the public, Fielding can vaunt his work without the stigma of appealing directly to the buying public.

> What Merit these Labours have is already known to yourself. If, from your favourable Judgment, I have conceived some Esteem for them, it cannot be imputed to Vanity; since I should have agreed as implicitly to your Opinion, had it been given in Favour of any other Man's Production. Negatively, at least, I may be allowed to say, that had I been sensible of any great Demerit in the Work, you are the last Person to whose Protection I would have ventured to recommend it (7).

Fielding thus figures his high self-regard as praise for the opinion of Lyttelton, and his high opinion of the work is portrayed as a gesture of respect for Lyttelton, whose time he would not willingly waste with an unworthy work. The public, instead of being addressed

[114] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971 [1740]), 3. Genette mentions, but does not discuss, *Pamela*; see *Paratexts*, 186.
[115] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. Sheridan Baker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973 [1749]), 5.

and courted here by Fielding, is merely witness to a literary transaction that helps them situate the author socially, morally, and intellectually. Once Fielding has established a relationship with Lyttelton, he can humorously condescend in the introduction to the work, to opine that an "Author ought to consider himself, not as a Gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary Treat, but rather as one who keeps a public Ordinary, at which all Persons are welcome for their Money" (I.1, 25).

Chesterfield, puffing Johnson's *Dictionary* in *The World*, thought it necessary to inform readers, in a rhetorically conspicuous location—a postscript—that he had not accepted money for his efforts. Chesterfield then turns his disavowal of profit motive into an occasion to suggest ingratitude, or a lack of decorum, on the part of Johnson and the booksellers:

> P. S. I hope that none of my courteous readers will upon this occasion be so uncourteous, as to suspect me of being a hired and interested puff of this work; for I most solemnly protest, that neither Mr. Johnson, nor any person employed by him, nor any bookseller or booksellers concerned in the success of it, have ever offered me the usual compliment of a pair of gloves or a bottle of wine; nor has even Mr. Dodsley, though my publisher, and, as I am informed, deeply interested in the sale of the dictionary, so much as invited me to take a bit of mutton with him.[116]

The mock solemnity of the postscript, rhetorically conspicuous while formally an afterthought, allows Chesterfield to establish his superiority to those who are "concerned in the success" of the *Dictionary* or "deeply interested" in its "sale"—who have, by implication, failed to observe decorum and their obligation to Chesterfield's

[116] *The World*, 100 (28 November 1754), 604.

condescension (by not offering "the usual compliment")—while at the same time not seeming to take the affair too seriously.[117]

In Johnson's anonymous dedications, ghostwritten for other writers, the dedication allows the writer to avoid the imputation of vanity by providing a way to claim praise by proxy, by the tacit or desired approval of the dedicatee. While still writing the *Rambler*, Johnson wrote a dedication for Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* to the "Right Honourable the Earl of Middlesex" in which he crystallizes many of the hazards of authorship that he enumerates over the course of the *Ramblers*: "The Dread which a Writer feels of the public Censure; the still greater Dread of Neglect; and the eager Wish for Support and Protection, which is impressed by the Consciousness of Imbecillity; are unknown to those who have never adventured into the World; and I am afraid Lord, equally unknown to those, who have always found the World ready to applaud them." Worried that "the Effects of my Fear" may be "imputed to my Vanity," the dedicator seeks rhetorical refuge in the dedicatee, whose implicit approval lends authority to the dedicator: "Whatever be supposed my Motive, the Praise of Judgment cannot be denied me; for, to whom can Timidity so properly fly for Shelter, as to him who has been so long distinguished for Candour and Humanity? . . . Or by what other means could I so powerfully suppress all Opposition, but that of Envy, as by declaring

[117] Dustin Griffin cites Chesterfield as an example of eighteenth-century patrons who "seem to have attempted to acquire a reputation for beneficence without actually laying out much money or political capital." Griffin argues that "after about 1750" all parties in the "literary system— authors, readers, critics, booksellers, and patrons — advance claims for their own literary authority. Each party in effect resists or contests the authority of every other party." *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 280-81.

myself, My Lord, Your Lordship's Obliged and most Obedient Humble Servant."[118] Unlike the hypothetical writer who was the subject of many *Rambler* essays, the author, at least rhetorically, enters the world under the protection of the patron rather than depending on personal authority. In some of the dedications Johnson later wrote, the dedicator's presumption pertains not to a sense of the author's own merit before the public, but the presumption of being worthy to be associated with the patron. In another dedication attributed to Johnson, the dedicator notes that "ambition, which often overpowers judgment in questions of more importance, has made me forget the disproportion between Your Lordship's name, and a Dramatic Pastoral."[119]

In writing the Preface, however, Johnson could not "fly for Shelter" to his patron, even had he been inclined to do so. But the lack of a dedication was now awkward, given Johnson's dedication in the *Plan* and the ambitions to authority of Johnson's *Dictionary*, and an ethos as a professional was not desirable. Johnson would have to address the public directly, without academic degree, without addressing the patron to whom he had dedicated the *Plan* of his *Dictionary*, and to a wide audience who might have access to his Preface through the magazines or reviews. Johnson's Preface was not only crucial to the reception of the *Dictionary*, but because of its high-profile nature, the Preface would be significant to Johnson's subsequent literary reputation as well.

While the writer of dedications could draw upon the long-established customs of decorum in dedications, Johnson had no precise precedent to follow in presenting himself

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[118] In Hazen, *Prefaces and Dedications*, 98.
[119] In Hazen, *Prefaces and Dedications*, 103. I do not have time here to explore the fact that the formal presenter of these two dedications is Charlotte Lennox, a fact that raises interesting questions about the how these self-presentations may have been calibrated to suit the gender of the nominal presenter.

and his labors when writing the Preface to a work that was both nationally significant scholarly folio and bookseller's project—despite the abundance of dictionary prefaces written before Johnson. Though there existed a long tradition of prefaces to English dictionaries, their value as precedents was diminished by the fact that those who wrote them were commonly described as plodding drudges or mean hacks. Johnson's introduction to his Preface—in which he notes that the "writer of dictionaries" has generally been considered a "humble drudge . . . doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which Learning and Genius press forward to conquest and glory"—is not merely an ironic conceit, but recognition of the tradition against which he had to portray himself (Sig. A2^{r}). The April 1755 *Monthly Review* noted, for instance, that "Lexicographers we have had, not a few, but such as, for the most part, were little better than copyists of each other."[120] One A. Y., eagerly anticipating the *Dictionary*'s impending release, related his view of Johnson's predecessors to the "*author of the* SCOTS MAGAZINE." Stating his own version of a commonplace view, he writes, "It was merrily said of the German writers, by one of the wits of France, that they were generally men of more shoulders than head, and that Apollo had condemned them to be the drudges and baggage-horses of Parnassus: an observation that admirably suits most of Mr Johnson's predecessors in dictionary-writing and glossography."[121] Pope employed the trope of the drudge in a letter to William Broome, thanking Broome for helping to annotate his translation of Homer. While Pope "had the flowery walks of the imagination to expatiate in," Broome had "drudged in only

[120] *The Monthly Review* 12 (April 1755), 292.
[121] *The Scots Magazine* 17 (February 1755), 91.

removing the loads, and clearing rubbish, heaped together by the negligence no less than by the industry of past pedants, whose very taste was generally so wrong, that they toiled most on what was least worth."[122] Ephraim Chambers himself was drawing on the well-worn trope of the thankless drudge or pioneer when he wrote, "Your Mines and subterranean Matters are mere drudgery, and Pioneers work; difficult to carry on, dubious of Success, and overlook'd when done."[123] Johnson himself employed the trope of the drudge or laborer of learning in *Rambler* 145, noting that most of the "authors of London" "however laborious, however arrogant, can only be considered as drudges of the pen, the manufacturers of literature, who have set up for authors;" and in *Rambler* 83, when he noted that "To mean understandings, it is sufficient honour to be numbered amongst the lowest labourers of learning," though to "hew stone, would have been unworthy of Palladio; and to have rambled in search of shells and flowers, had but ill-suited with the capacity of Newton."[124]

And if the presumed drudges among English lexicography's tradition were inadequate models for Johnson's self-presentation, other predecessors were inadequate for different reasons: they were members of an elite Academy or died *in medias res*.[125]

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[122] (24 March 1720), in *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) 2:40; also quoted in James R. Sutherland, "The Dull Duty of an Editor," *Essential Articles for the Study of Alexander Pope*, ed. Maynard Mack (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1964), 639.
[123] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia* (London, 1728), xxii.
[124] Yale *Works*, V, 10; IV, 76.
[125] Paul J. Korshin, as well as Gwin J. Kolb and Robert DeMaria, Jr., have pointed out that even when talking about very personal matters in the Preface Johnson may have consulted what they respectively term "the tradition of *lacrimae lexicographi*" and the "lugubrious tradition of humanistic lexicography." Korshin suggests similarities between Johnson's Preface and the "Epistola Dedicatoria" written by the son of Johannes Buxtorf for his late father's posthumously published *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmudicum, et Rabbinicum* (Basle, 1639); see "Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974): 305-06. Robert DeMaria, Jr. and Gwin J. Kolb argue that Johnson's "elegiac and traditional

Johnson's *Dictionary*, always conceived to compete with those of the continental academies, was not a project of an academic cultural elite, but a bookseller's project, and was presented, at least, as the work of one man. Even though Johnson could mine abundant materials for his Preface from predecessors, he had few precise precursors whose scholarly self-representation he could emulate; few, if any, predecessors who presented so ambitious a work of scholarship both without a patron and for a congeries of booksellers.[126] Such a self-presentation, as I have argued, would not have been a simple matter for a man who could not deflect the taint of writing for money by feigning literary retirement. Johnson's honorary degree just before the *Dictionary*'s publication, Chesterfield's two letters in *The World* puffing the *Dictionary* months before its release, and the booksellers's re-release, gratis, of the *Plan* dedicated to Chesterfield all occurred, I argue, after Johnson wrote the Preface. When Johnson wrote the Preface, he could only count on his own performance to vouch for his labors.

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Johnson's awkward rhetorical circumstances when writing the Preface have been obscured not only because of complex and changing circumstances surrounding the *Dictionary*'s publication, but also because Johnson has long stood to represent an emerging class of professional writers beholden not to patronage but rather the public.

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sentiments in the Preface" have antecedents in prefaces lamenting the death of the lexicographer, "Johnson's 'Dictionary' and Dictionary Johnson," *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 42.

[126] John Considine argues that Johnson learned how to present lexicography as heroic from the preliminary matter of Henri Estienne's *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* of 1572, "The Lexicographer as Hero: Samuel Johnson and Henri Estienne," *Philological Quarterly* 79 (2000): 205-24. Considine suggests that early modern scholars such as Estienne began to make "judicious use of preliminary material" to present themselves "carefully" to their readers (213), but does not suggest how Johnson would have calibrated his own self-presentation, given the circumstances I have outlined.

But this traditional view of Johnson obscures one of the most interesting aspects of his literary career: he is the most conspicuous example of an English writer in the eighteenth century who stands at the crossroads of patronage, the market, and academia. Few other writers participated so fully in all modes of the changing world of eighteenth-century literature, a period which is, as Dustin Griffin argues, "characterized by overlapping 'economies' of patronage *and* marketplace."[127] Because of Johnson's letter to Chesterfield and perhaps his reputed utterance about no one but a blockhead writing, except for money, Johnson has long stood as the harbinger of a new age of independent authors who were beholden to the market and not to patrons for approval. But Griffin argues convincingly that Johnson's letter to Chesterfield is "not so much evidence of the end of the era of the patron, as of an injured but proud author's sense that a patron had failed to observe the system's norms."[128] In his day, Johnson was attacked for accepting in 1762 a royal pension of £300 per annum.[129] And, as Hazen notes, Johnson wrote

[127] Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England*, 10.
[128] Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England*, 247. For two views, in addition to Griffin's, on the nature of the misunderstanding between Johnson and Chesterfield, see Paul J. Korshin, "The Johnson-Chesterfield Relationship: A New Hypothesis," *PMLA* 85 (1970): 247-59; Jacob Leed, "Johnson and Chesterfield: 1746-47," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 12 (1970): 1677-90; as well as Korshin, "Johnson and and Literary Patronage: A Comment on Jacob Leed's article," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 12 (1971): 1804-11; and Leed, "Johnson, Chesterfield, and Patronage: A Response to Paul Korshin," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 13 (1971): 2011-15. Korshin argues that Chesterfield did follow the norms of patronly giving by offering "small-gift patronage" (e.g., £10) of the "kind most frequently available to writers in the 1740s," and the benefit of having Chesterfield's name associated with the project; "Johnson and Literary Patronage," 1806-1807. Leed, by contrast, writes that many "instances of considerable financial support [for writers] can be cited from mid-century," but asserts that "the main difficulty with Korshin's suggestion is that it does not seem to allow for Johnson's disappointment," ("Johnson, Chesterfield, and Patronage," 2011). Korshin continues the discussion in "Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1974): 453-73.
[129] For the most thorough analysis of the pension and its circumstances, see James Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson*, Ch. 16, "The Pensioner," 262-77.

twenty dedications over a thirty-year period following the incident with Chesterfield, and thus can be considered a "chief propagator" of the patronage system.[130]

Yet Johnson's presumed independence of the patronage system, and his deep participation in writings for the market, have perhaps led scholars to generalize too hastily that Johnson's public persona was proudly professional. Alvin Kernan, for instance, uses the "blockhead" quote to underscore his claim that Johnson did not just accept his status as a professional writer, but that he flaunted it. "He not only accepted but boasted that his writing often had little to do with inspiration. . . . He also openly acknowledged, even flaunted, his status as a wage-earner: 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.'"[131] Simon Jarvis, drawing on Kernan's characterization of Johnson, writes that Johnson "was happy (unlike many of his predecessors) to acknowledge that he wrote for money," and argues for "Johnson's explicit self-construction as a professional writer."[132] But other scholars have emphasized Johnson's strong identification with Renaissance humanists, many of whom practiced under patronage. DeMaria has described Johnson's life as an unhappy compromise between his desire to lead the life of a Renaissance-humanist scholar and both "financial exigencies

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[130] Hazen, *Prefaces and Dedications*, xix. Boswell praises Johnson as a master-writer of dedications, "that courtly species of writing," adding, however, that the "loftiness" of Johnson's "mind prevented him from ever dedicating in his own person"; *Life*, II, 1.

[131] Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters & Samuel Johnson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 96-97. While Kernan reads the "blockhead" quote as the proud boast of a wage-earner, Paul Fussell argues that in this comment Johnson "is doing many things at once, but the one thing he is not doing is registering his own convictions on the matter. . . . In talking about money as the motive for writing, he intends to startle the genteel and the sentimental, to undermine easy cant on the subject of literary motive by making the whole question, as it is discussed in public, appear naïve and stupid," *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 111. In the end, it is easy to grant too much significance to this quote, whose provenance and rhetorical context are unclear. For Boswell's presentation of this quote, see *Life*, III, 19.

[132] Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearian Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 129, 139.

and the nature of the publishing world in which he lived."[133] Because Johnson's *Dictionary* was, in fact, presented as a work of high scholarly pretensions, a proudly explicit professional persona would have been an awkward choice. Whatever Johnson may have later said about his own writing career or motives of writers, when writing the Preface, Johnson would have had little reason to declare his professionalism with conspicuous pride.

If Johnson emphasized at times his status as a professional writer and figured his booksellers as his patrons, he fashioned himself as a learned scholar at other times, even though he generally remained an outsider to the academy. Johnson never allied himself in his public writings directly with booksellers. Boswell claimed that Johnson viewed the *Dictionary* booksellers as "patrons of literature," and Johnson did write playfully that bookseller Robert Dodsley, "Doddy," was his patron. Johnson called bookseller Andrew Millar "the Maecenas of the age," and Boswell records Johnson as saying of him, "I respect Millar, Sir; he has raised the price of literature." Johnson also once told Boswell that the booksellers who underwrote his *Dictionary* were "generous liberal-minded men."[134]

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[133] *The Life of Samuel Johnson: A Critical Biography*, 157 and passim. W. Jackson Bate discusses Johnson's "ideal of the Renaissance scholar-Humanist" in *Samuel Johnson* (New York & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, 1977), 447. Nicholas Hudson refers to "Johnson's vision of himself as an independent scholar" in "Johnson's *Dictionary* and the Politics of 'Standard English,'" *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 78. Paul J. Korshin has discussed Johnson's familiarity with early modern humanistic authors as evidenced in the *Ramblers*, "'Johnson and . . .': Conceptions of Literary Relationship," in *Greene Centennial Studies: Essays Presented to Donald Greene in the Centennial Year of the University of Southern California*, ed. Paul J. Korshin and Robert R. Allen (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 298-301. Korshin also suggests Johnson's familiarity with early modern lexicography in "Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary."

[134] *Life*, I, 305; *Letters*, I, 173; *Life*, I, 287 n. 3., 288, 304.

Yet if Johnson at times saw himself as a professional writer working for a new kind of patron, he also identified himself as a scholar, and in Boswell's view, no "man had a higher notion of the dignity of literature than Johnson, or was more determined in maintaining the respect which he justly considered due to it."[135] When Johnson, having received two honorary doctorates and a royal pension, advises the Master of Oxford's University College on how Clarendon Press might bring a profit, he presents himself to the Oxford don as a fellow scholar and as a man whose worldly experience qualifies him to inform the don on details of "the circulation of Books which perhaps every man has not had opportunity of knowing and which those who know it, do not perhaps always distinctly consider." Johnson allies himself with the academy when addressing the don, suggesting that however often one might describe booksellers as patrons, no bookseller published anything, except for money: "I suppose," Johnson writes, "with all our scholastick ignorance of mankind we are still too knowing to expect that the Booksellers will erect themselves into Patrons and buy and sell under the influence of a disinterested zeal for the promotion of Learning."[136] In the letter to Chesterfield, Johnson makes no reference to himself as a professional writer, but refers to himself as a "retired and uncourtly Scholar."[137] Johnson's encounter with Thomas Osborne, in which Johnson

[135] *Life*, III, 310.
[136] *Letters*, II, 308, 306.
[137] *Letters*, I, 95. Given Chesterfield's mention in *The World* of Johnson's "literary retirement," Johnson's self-description here as a "retired" scholar may be read as sarcastic. When recommending that Johnson include in his *Dictionary* "that most important verb, TO FUZZ," a term from the card game whist, he added "I am not sure that [the word] has yet made it's [sic] way into Mr. Johnson's literary retirement." *The World* 101 (5 December 1754), 607. Chesterfield's reference to Johnson's "literary retirement" may be a euphemistic way to call Johnson unworldly while at the same time trying to help publicly fashion for Johnson an ethos of the comfortably retired and 'liberal' man of letters. The fact that Chesterfield would recommend, even if playfully, "a small supplemental dictionary" of words used by the "BEAU MONDE" in December, when the *Dictionary* was in its final stages of printing, and when Johnson was still gently

reportedly used a folio to fell the "impertinent" bookseller who hired him to catalogue the Harleian Library, has been read as an instance of a scholar maintaining independence from the commercial interests of a market-driven bookseller.[138] Boswell relates an anecdote as a "characteristical instance" of Johnson's steadfast maintenance of the "dignity of literature":

> He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that once when he dined in a numerous company of booksellers, where the room being small, the head of the table, at which he sat, was almost close to the fire, he persevered in suffering a great deal of inconvenience from the heat, rather than quit his place, and let one of them sit above him.[139]

Johnson's maintenance of position above the booksellers suggests Johnson's own sense of his own dignity, and suggests that he thought of himself as more than just a literary wage-earner. But as proud as Johnson must have been upon receiving his honorary Oxford M.A. just before the *Dictionary* was published, his letter to the Oxford don in 1776 indicates his worldliness, in comparsion to the retired scholar.

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petitioning the aid of Thomas Warton and Francis Wise in securing an honorary M. A. from Oxford, would have underscored for Johnson how out of touch Chesterfield was with the progress of a project he was publicly sponsoring. *The World* 101 (5 December 1754), 610. For another analysis of Johnson's reasons to be annoyed by Chesterfield's puffs and the "equally demeaning paper" they prompted Richard Owen Cambridge to write, see Howard Weinbrot, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and *The World*: The Papers of Lord Chesterfield and Richard Owen Cambridge," *Philological Quarterly* 50 (1971): 663-69. Weinbrot argues that Chesterfield and Cambridge both insult Johnson and his project by suggesting that he would make lexicographic decisions to enhance sales or on the basis of "financial self-interest" (668). Such insinuations in *The World* would have only underscored the *Dictionary*'s status as a bookseller's project, and partly explains why Johnson would want to avoid seeming self-interested in the Preface. It is important to note, in addition, that while I suggest a kind of rhetorical interplay between the wording of Chesterfield's puffs and the wording of Johnson's letter to Chesterfield, the original of Johnson's letter is untraced. The only extant copies of the letter authorized by Johnson are the undated British Library version dictated to Giuseppe Baretti and corrected by Johnson, as well as the copy dictated from memory to Boswell in 1781, now held at Yale University's Beinecke Library. In his edition of Johnson's letters, Bruce Redford uses the British Library MS as his copy-text but lists variants found in the Yale MS; see *Letters*, I, 94-97.

[138] *Life*, I, 154. For a reading of this episode, see DeMaria, Jr. *The Life of Samuel Johnson: A Critical Biography*, 105-106.

[139] *Life*, III, 311.

But even though Johnson identified with scholars, he was an outsider to academia when he compiled the *Dictionary* and wrote the Preface. When the Oxford dropout visited his old campus in 1754 to complete some final work for the *Dictionary*, he found a cold reception from the master of his old college. Johnson told his friend Thomas Warton, the Oxford professor who hosted Johnson, "*There* lives a man, who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it." And upon seeing his old University College fellow, Mr. Meeke, Johnson said to Warton, "I used to think Meeke had excellent parts, when we were boys together at the College: but, alas! 'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!' . . . . About the same time of life, Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, Sir, see the difference of our literary characters!"[140]

Given Johnson's position as a man who participated in all aspects of the overlapping economy, no categorical, historically unsensitive description of his literary persona is adequate. Johnson seems to have enjoyed being a man of the world among dons and a man of learning among booksellers. Johnson's claim—"No man . . . who ever lived by literature, has lived more independently than I have done"—suggests his own sense that he occupied an unusual position in the changing literary economies of the eighteenth century.[141] Johnson's position at the crossroads of patronage, the market, and academia was dynamic, and Johnson took rhetorical advantage of this awkward position depending on his situation, modifying his presentation by emphasizing one aspect of his persona or another. Martin Wechselblatt has rightly suggested that Johnson is a

[140] *Life*, I, 272, 274.
[141] *Life*, I, 443.

"characteristically modern, hybrid version of a scholar because of his circumstances," and that Johnson "sometimes construed" his *Dictionary* "and persona in terms derived from the Anglo-Latin tradition of scholarship and sometimes in terms derived from Grub Street, the public sphere, and the marketplace."[142] But while Johnson could not deny that his *Dictionary* was a product of the marketplace, he would have little to gain by cultivating the persona of a Grub Street laborer in the Preface.

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If Johnson found ways to negotiate his way successfully among these often overlapping and intersecting components of the literary economy over the years, his position in 1754, when he wrote the Preface, left less room for negotiation. He was presenting an ambitious work of learning to the international republic of letters without even the implicit sanction of patron or academic degree. Johnson did not receive his M. A. from Oxford until February 1755, two months before the publication of the *Dictionary*, and at the end of December 1754 he had not mentioned the possibility of receiving the degree to his friends "for fear of being laughed at for my disappointment." And even on 13 February 1755 Johnson still did not "know in what state my little affair stands."[143] By remembering these circumstances of Johnson's literary career we can

[142] Martin Wechselblatt, *Bad Behavior: Samuel Johnson and Modern Cultural Authority* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1998), 33. In "The Pathos of Example: Professionalism and Colonization in Johnson's 'Preface' to the Dictionary," Wechselblatt points out Johnson's "remarkable double identity as alternately sage and hack, the 'Great Cham' and ghost writer, preeminent European Latinist and publisher's hireling," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9 (1996): 382.
[143] *Letters*, I, 90; *Life*, I, 97.

avoid anachronistically projecting our own belated sense of the "Dr." onto the man who compiled the *Dictionary* and who presented it to the public for the first time.[144]

In closing the Preface Johnson dismisses his *Dictionary* "with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise," but this dismissal comes only after he has dramatically documented his intellectual labors and his sacrifices for the language and the nation (Sig. C2^{v}). In this peroration delivered before the literary marketplace Johnson lays bare for readers his endurance of what were often seen as vitiating effects on a writer's mind and work—"inconvenience and distraction, . . . sickness and sorrow" (Sig. C2^{v}). But in underscoring these experiences alongside his careful delineations of his achievements, Johnson converts his travails outside the "soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers" from potentially vitiating liabilities to the noble sacrifices of an intellectual hero (Sig. C2^{v}). Johnson's choice to present himself as unbeholden to patron or academy for his work was not necessarily a statement, by default, of proud professionalism, but was essentially true, especially while he was still unclear about whether he would receive a degree at all. Given his tenuous social status, and the burden of having to defend his work without much symbolic capital, he had to make the most of the truth. Having read Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Sir Charles Grandison*, Johnson advises Richardson against employing the conventional conceits of disavowing prefaces. Johnson wrote that he had

[144] Johnson himself never used the title of "Dr.," and even the appearance of "A.M." no longer appeared on the *Dictionary* title page after the first three editions. The last two editions of the *Dictionary* appearing in his lifetime (4th, 1773; 5th, 1784) include no degree distinction after his name at all, even though by this time he could have used "LL.D."

> no objection but to the preface in which You first mention the letters as fallen by some chance into your hands, and afterwards mention your health as such that you almost despaired of going through your plan. If you were to require my opinion which part should be changed, I should be inclined to the suppression of that part which seems to disclaim the composition. What is modesty if it departs from truth? Of what use is the disguise by which nothing is concealed?[145]

In constructing the rhetoric of the Preface, Johnson did not attempt to conceal his circumstances, but made them the basis of his merit, as others had before him. Johnson had already pointed out in *Rambler* 77 that the

> miseries of the learned have been related by themselves; and since they have not been found exempt from that partiality with which men look upon their own actions and sufferings, we may conclude that they have not forgotten to deck their cause with the brightest ornaments, and strongest colours.[146]

An understanding of Johnson's rhetorical circumstances, shaped as they were by forces beyond his control, helps account for the striking vacillations between pride and humility in the Preface, often interpreted simply as latent psychological tendencies made manifest. Johnson's humility is not ironic, as some have argued, but rather an honest and rhetorically desirable counterpoise to the praise that Johnson's circumstances required him to bestow on himself. These circumstances remind us that the Preface is not merely an account of Johnson's methodological decisions or his views on language—it is a crucial document, even more so than the letter to Chesterfield—in the history of authorial self-representation.

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[145] *Letters*, I, 74.
[146] Yale *Works*, IV, 39.

II. "Defensive Pride": The Moral and Rhetorical Foundations of the Preface in Johnson's Rambler *and* Adventurer

Johnson's longtime friend, Dr. William Adams, hearing Johnson claim Chesterfield to be "the proudest man this day existing," responded, "'No, there is one person, at least, as proud; I think, by your own account, you are the prouder man of the two.' 'But mine (replied Johnson, instantly) was *defensive* pride.' This, as Dr. Adams well observed, was one of those happy turns for which he was so remarkably ready."[147] Johnson's clever qualification of his alleged pride in this anecdote is amusing, in part because of the oxymoronic character of the phrase "*defensive* pride." The presumed virtues of the modifier morally counteract the admitted vice implied by the noun, as in the modern phrase, "preemptive strike." Johnson's "happy turn" justifies his pride as an act of self-defense, a reaction to an outside stimulus, rather than the exuberance of corrupt, innate inclinations. At the same time, an act of "defense" itself requires a degree of pride. Johnson does not deny his pride, but mitigates it in a phrase that performs, in a very compressed way, the kind of casuistry or ethical estimation that Johnson frequently practices in his *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays and later employs when writing his Preface to the folio *Dictionary*.

Thus Johnson's Preface is the product of a kind of careful rhetorical casuistry by which Johnson determined how to acknowledge what he thought were the true merits of his work without veering into prideful self-praise. We see Johnson in the Preface seeking the kind of middle path of virtue he had recommended in his periodical essays, a "path

[147] *Life*, I, 265. Italics in original.

which it is every man's duty to find, and to keep," yet one that is "so narrow, that it cannot easily be discovered, and so little beaten that there are no certain marks by which it can be followed" (*Rambler* 129, IV, 322). In the Preface, Johnson tries to strike the proper balance between various contraries, just as he recommends in the essays—between "arrogance and submission" (*Rambler* 1, III, 7), between "false hopes and false terrors" (*Rambler* 25, III, 140), between "confidence and despondency" (*Adventurer* 81, II, 401), between "firmness and spirit" on one hand and the "softness, diffidence, and moderation" that "will often be mistaken for imbecility and dejection" on the other (*Rambler* 176, V, 165). Seen within this context, Johnson's readiness in responding to Adams's playful charge of pride may not just reflect Johnson's well-documented talent for witty retort; it may also reflect Johnson's long meditations in his essays on "the case of the author entering the world" (*Rambler* 1, III, 5), where he perhaps unwittingly rehearses and ethically assesses the rhetorical choices and lines of defense that he later uses in writing the Preface. By the time Johnson wrote the Preface and his letter to Chesterfield he had long since considered the appropriate, ethical response to Chesterfield, justifying his pride, both in the letter and in the Preface, as properly defensive.

Scholars have used various terms to describe the striking co-presence of pride and humility in the Preface: "It is at once an apology and an exultation"; it contains "self-aggrandizement and self-effacement"; it "both celebrates and apologizes for the tenuous authority and independent authorship of its creator"; its movement "back and forth between aspiration and limitation, desire and sad constraint" represents the

"extraordinary tension of the Preface"; "Johnson defines his lexicographic task as the work of 'a harmless drudge,' but in the final paragraph of his Preface. . . assumes a stance of near heroic indifference, maintaining a fragile balance between arrogance and high nobility"; Johnson displays an "alternating pattern . . . , balancing great aspirations with menial position. . . , vaunted achievement with a sense of the ultimate littleness of achievement."[148] But despite this consensus on Johnson's manner of proceeding, it has seldom extended beyond mere observation. Little has been put forward to explain this co-presence of pride and humility other than Lawrence Lipking's suggestion that it represents the unconscious and alternating profusion of poorly controlled "opposing inclinations" rather than a conscious rhetorical strategy.[149]

Those, however, who read at least Johnson's *humility* in the Preface as conscious read it as necessarily ironic: there is "a distinct degree of irony in Johnson's repeatedly

[148] The quotes, in order, appear in Paul Fussell, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing*, 206; Lawrence Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 131; Dennis Dean Kezar Jr., "Radical Letters and Male Genealogies in Johnson's *Dictionary*," *SEL* 35 (Summer 1995): 511; Daniel P. Gunn, "The Lexicographer's Task: Language, Reason, and Idealism in Johnson's *Dictionary* Preface," *The Age of Johnson* 11 (2000): 118; Richard B. Schwartz, "Johnson's 'Mr. Rambler' and the Periodical Tradition," *Genre* 7 (1974): 200; Isobel Grundy, *Samuel Johnson and the Scale of Greatness* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), 235.

[149] Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, 44. Lipking here is writing about the *Rambler*, but he argues throughout that "preemptive dejection" is Johnson's characteristic attitude with respect to the reception of his work; it serves as a "dose of poison to build up one's resistance," 37. Lipking finds preemptive dejection reflected in the Preface and elsewhere in his work; see Lipking, ibid., 36-7, 115, 156, 219, 236, 269. Richard B. Schwartz argues that "pride and humility" are self-consciously chosen components of Johnson's "Mr. Rambler," since Johnson, he argues, had to create an "advisor" who "must exhibit the humility which he recommends throughout the *Rambler* as an alternative to vanity and vain desire, yet maintain a sufficient degree of self-assurance to bring his points home without dissipating them in a flood of modesty and timidity," 198. Schwartz is right to point out the importance of pride and humility as a topos in the essays, but his interpretation seems to conflate Johnson's ethos with that significant topos.

humble and derogatory statements about his labors."[150] Paul Korshin finds notes of "ironic self-deprecation" in the Preface, and Paul Fussell goes further, arguing that the "whole framework of the Preface is ironic, depending as it does on repeated contrasts between the pleasant clarities and simplicities of the job when first projected, and the sad obscurities, complexities, and frustrations experienced when the job was actually in hand."[151] Yet for Johnson to be only ironically humble therein might allow too much room for pride in a public document of self-appraisal where a surfeit of pride might court the very kind of criticism the Preface is calculated to preempt. To read Johnson's humility as ironic or comic precludes the possibility that Johnson wanted to display humility—that his humility was both genuine and part of a self-conscious rhetorical strategy of defensive pride.

In fact, Johnson's alternating pride and humility in the Preface replicates the kind of autodidactic moral self-regulation that Johnson recommends throughout the periodical essays written while he prepared the *Dictionary*. Johnson quite consciously shuttles back and forth in the Preface between pride and humility because it is a dignified yet modest way for an author, or lexicographer, presenting his work to the public without the legitimizing cachet of a dedication, a list of subscribers, or even an academic degree, to recommend such an ambitious folio *Dictionary* to the public. Though there was a long tradition of panegyric in dedications, there was no dignified tradition of self-panegyric. Moreover, Johnson's loss of contact with his patron, lack of any academic degree, and his

[150] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the* Rambler *and* Dictionary *of Samuel Johnson*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 23. Daniel P. Gunn agrees with Wimsatt, "The Lexicographer's Task," 106.
[151] Korshin, "Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary," 304; Fussell, *Johnson and the Life of Writing*, 206.

tenuous social position made such self-recommendation an unattractive proposition in an agonistic eighteenth-century world of letters where "he that writes may be considered as a kind of general challenger, whom every one has a right to attack" (*Rambler* 93, IV, 133-34). On top of that, by recommending himself directly to the public, rather than to the patron of the *Plan*, Johnson would open himself to the charge of ingratitude.

The rhetorical circumstances of the Preface recommended the virtues of humility, even where self-praise was quite practical. However awkward Johnson's rhetorical circumstances were in writing the Preface, he did not approach them cold when writing the Preface. He had, wittingly or not, developed the basis for approaching those circumstances in the *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays. In this portion of the chapter, I aim to establish a generally overlooked but important connection between these essays and Johnson's rhetorical choices in the Preface.

Johnson's self-presentation in the Preface follows the counsel he gives to readers, and, crucially, I argue, to *himself*, throughout the *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays, where he traces the middle path by examining the contrary choices an author has. Johnson's meditations on authorial self-presentation explore the same social and moral terrain covered in *Rambler* 166, where Johnson observes that he "who fails to please in his salutation and address is at once rejected, and never obtains an opportunity of showing his latent excellencies, or essential qualities." Taking this as a given, Johnson considers what "manner of approach" might bring success to "distressed" petitioners "whose condition subjects every kind of behaviour equally to miscarriage." He

> whose confidence of merit incites him to meet without any sense of inferiority the eyes of those who flattered themselves with their own dignity, is considered as an

> insolent leveller, impatient of the just prerogatives of rank and wealth, eager to usurp the station to which he has no right, and to confound the subordinations of society; and who would contribute to the exaltation of that spirit, which even want and calamity are not able to restrain from rudeness and rebellion?
>
> But no better success will commonly be found to attend servility and dejection, which often give pride the confidence to treat them with contempt. A request made with diffidence and timidity is easily denied, because the petitioner seems to doubt its fitness. (*Rambler* 166, V, 117-18)

Johnson pursues a "middle path" of virtuous and dignified self-representation that stood "between faults on either hand," knowing that "the place of the middle point may always be disputed" (*Rambler* 76, IV, 36), and conscious of the mind's capacity for self-deception, by which "all the artifices of self-deceit" give "us time to form distinctions in our own favour, and reason by degrees submits to absurdity, as the eye is in time accommodated to darkness" (*Rambler* 8, III, 43).

Emboldened by a faith in properly spirited self-presentation, yet careful to avoid vitiating "ensnarers of the mind" (*Rambler* 155, V, 65) such as vanity, Johnson juxtaposes indirect yet grand commendations of himself in the Preface with admissions of fault that temper his self-praise, yet whose proximity to praise prevents an undignified display of diffidence. Johnson's presumably just self-estimation prevents excessive diffidence, and humility counteracts Johnson's proleptic defense of faults, preventing them from becoming prideful. Such a rhetorical approach is consonant with Johnson's recommendation in his essays that one should attack "disease[s] of the intellect" with "proper counteraction" (*Rambler* 89, IV, 107), and in the Preface he applies "austerity," in the form of humility, as a "proper antidote" to whatever "indulgence" he allows himself, since "diseases of mind as well as body are cured by contraries, and to contraries we should readily have recourse, if we dreaded guilt as we dread pain" (*Rambler* 110, IV,

225). In the Preface Johnson proceeds consciously by rhetorical counteraction, repeatedly juxtaposing contraries to prevent either tendency from overpowering the other, and endeavoring to strike a balance close to the elusive middle point that "may always be disputed" (*Rambler* 76, IV, 36).

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Several scholars have identified the late 1740s and the 1750s, when Johnson wrote "The Vanity of Human Wishes," wrote the *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays, and completed the *Dictionary*, as the period during which, in the words of Allen Reddick, Johnson's "critical genius matured brilliantly;" his "weight as a great moral prose writer solidifies for the first time;" and his mature character forged.[152] Robert DeMaria, Jr. notes that in the *Rambler* Johnson "found a distinctive voice and created a literary persona that he enjoyed being."[153] And while various connections between the *Ramblers* and the *Dictionary* have been suggested, no scholar has discussed the extent to which Johnson formed the style, manner, and a rationale for the arrangement of his Preface—its ethos, tropes, and figures, as well as its mode of rhetorical and moral counteraction—in his *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays. Before Johnson had delivered his folio Preface to the public, these periodical essays served as rigorous inventional exercises in which Johnson, writing for a wide audience, cultivated the voice and manner of the independent man of learning, a voice he would adopt in the Preface and continue to refine thereafter.[154]

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[152] Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 68.
[153] DeMaria, Jr. *The Life of Samuel Johnson: A Critical Biography*, 144.
[154] As Roy M. Wiles has shown, the slow initial sales of the folio *Ramblers* do not adequately reflect the circulation of these essays, since many were published in several provincial newspapers and magazines throughout Britain. See "The Contemporary Distribution of Johnson's Rambler," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (1968): 155-71.

Johnson's *Rambler* and *Adventurer* essays were not highly topical, and Johnson's frequent recourse to the Mr. Rambler persona and the voices of his fictional correspondents should caution the reader not to view individual essays as windows into Johnson's mind, but recurring topics and themes in the essays suggest some concerns that would be relevant to a man in Johnson's circumstances.[155] Among other topics, the essays tend to revisit the hopes and fears of writers alternately pursuing fame and dreading censure or neglect, the most effective way for authors to present themselves, the impediments and spurs for projectors of grand schemes, the scholar's need to balance

[155] Fussell, *Johnson and the Life of Writing*, 152, argues that it "would not be going far wrong to say that the *Rambler* constitutes a translation into objective moral and psychological terms of much of the personal anguish Johnson felt in forcing himself to fulfill the *Dictionary* contract." Paul J. Korshin also suggests a relationship between topics in the *Rambler* and Johnson's difficulties with the *Dictionary* project. Korshin argues more generally that a close examination of the *Rambler* for 1751 can "enlarge our knowledge of his life in that year," and yield "an understanding of Johnson's intellectual development;" see "'Johnson and. . . ': Conceptions of Literary Relationship," *Greene Centennial Studies: Essays Presented to Donald Greene in the Centennial Year of the University of Southern California*, Paul J. Korshin and Robert R. Allen, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 301. Referring to Johnson's frequent reference in the essays to "humanistic authors from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth century," Korshin writes that Johnson often "tried to turn his scholarly interests to everyday life as represented in the subjects of the essays," 299. Richard B. Schwartz has gone further, arguing that "Mr. Rambler is a Johnsonian self-portrait and should be considered as such;" see Schwartz, "Johnson's 'Mr. Rambler,'" 197. Robert DeMaria, Jr, citing Schwartz, writes that "Johnson is not exactly equivalent to Mr Rambler, but the mask is in many ways a self-portrait. In the *Rambler* Johnson found a distinctive voice and created a literary persona that he enjoyed being. . . . Although he should not be equated with Mr Rambler . . . these 208 essays represent the full flowering of his literary identity. . . . [B]y the time he finished the *Rambler* Johnson's literary identity had an integrity and a centre that would hold together for the rest of his life"; *The Life of Johnson: A Critical Biography*, 144, 159. Lawrence Lipking points out that Johnson "puts on the mask of a much older man" in the *Rambler*. Johnson, forty-one at the time, claims as Mr. Rambler to have known Suspirius the screech-owl "fifty-eight years and four months" (*Rambler* 58, III, 315). As Lipking points out, the reference contains a joking self-reference; Mr. Rambler's comment appears in the fifty-eighth *Rambler*, just after the fourth paragraph; see Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, 149-50. In general, I argue that Johnson's topics can plausibly be seen to spring from his own exigencies as a lexicographer negotiating his way through methodological and financial straits, and from his concerns as someone who would soon be presenting an ambitious work to an agonistic marketplace. In his essays, Johnson was able to rehearse and fashion a public persona, and he was able to theorize a pragmatic and ethical mode of self-representation.

closeted abstraction with social engagement, and the role of patronage in promoting or neglecting literary endeavors.[156]

In a cogent study of Johnson's recurring rhetorical strategies in the *Rambler*, Steven Lynn notes that Johnson begins with an "epigraph, drawn from the classics, which functions like a sermon text, encapsulating, stimulating, authorizing what follows."[157] Yet while these epigraphs begin the actual text of the *Ramblers*, their exigence is often consistent with, if not shaped by, Johnson's moral, material, and methodological concerns that informed and inspired these texts as he worked on the *Dictionary*, the largest and most labor-intensive project he had ever attempted. According to Allen Reddick, Johnson experienced a methodological crisis midway through his work on the *Dictionary*.[158] If this is true, the first appearance in 1750 of Johnson's *Rambler* essays occurred not long after this crisis. Whether or not Johnson experienced a full-blown crisis, his work was taking longer than planned, and an angry letter of Johnson's in November 1751 to his friend and printer William Strahan indicates that the booksellers

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[156] Jacob Leed points out that a fifth (42 of 208) of the *Ramblers* mention patronage in some sense. See "Patronage in the Rambler," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 14 (1972): 5.

[157] Steven Lynn, "Johnson's Rambler and Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1986): 466.

[158] On the basis of bibliographical and manuscript evidence, as well as his examination of Johnson's *Dictionary* and its 4th edition revision, Reddick argues that "Johnson's model, which he outlines in the Plan, for determining a set number and type of definitions for each word, proved to be inflexible and inadequate, as did the guidance he was probably receiving from his checking of [Nathaniel] Bailey and other dictionaries, whose definitions may have caused Johnson to underestimate what his own dictionary, in responding to examples of usage, would require. He was overwhelmed with the number of different usages illustrated in the passages that he found he had marked and gathered, a wealth of language that could not be accommodated by his system of definition. At some stage, then — probably late 1749 or early 1750 — Johnson saw that his method of completing the copy, along with the manuscript itself, would have to be abandoned;" Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 43. For more detail on how Johnson's system of definition was eluded by the exuberance of language, see Reddick, ibid., ch. 3, as well as Elizabeth Hedrick, "Locke's Theory of Language and Johnson's Dictionary," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1987): 443.

began to put pressure on Johnson, who had signed a contract in 1746, to finish the job.[159] On top of that, Johnson was experiencing financial difficulties, despite the weekly 4 guineas he received for writing two *Ramblers* a week, and despite selling the copyright for the *Ramblers* to Edward Cave. Between April and August of 1751, Johnson wrote three letters to bookseller John Newberry requesting loans.[160] In addition, his loss of contact with his patron may have led him to consider how to approach the awkward task of writing a Preface to his ambitious folio when his audience might expect a dedication to Chesterfield.

While the *Rambler* essays, in particular, have generally and rightly been viewed as didactic essays calculated to instruct the public, they can also be viewed as autodidactic meditations in which Johnson provides counsel not just to the public but to himself at a time when he was experiencing methodological and financial difficulties, at a time when he "often had occasion to consider the contrary effects of presumption and despondency; of heady confidence, which promises victory without contest, and heartless pusillanimity, which shrinks back from the thought of great undertakings, confounds difficulty with impossibility, and considers all advancement toward any new attainment as irreversibly prohibited" (*Rambler* 25, III, 137). While Johnson's *Ramblers* address moral questions in the generalized language of the moral philosopher, and his primary purpose is to instruct the public, the very frequency of personally relevant topics, along with what we know about Johnson's activities during this period, suggests that Johnson's muse frequently prompted him to explore topics that related in some way to his work on

[159] *Letters*, I, 50-51.
[160] See Johnson's letters in 1751 for 15 April, 29 July, and 24 August in *Letters*, vol. I.

the *Dictionary*. Responding to critics who offered him suggestions, Mr. Rambler wrote that "an author has a rule of choice peculiar to himself; and selects those subjects which he is best qualified to treat, by the course of his studies, or the accidents of his life" (*Rambler* 23, III, 129).

Both the freedom of the essay form, and the formal anonymity of the essays, published without Johnson's name attached to them, provided Johnson a relatively unthreatening context within which to develop his public voice and explore various sides of personal concerns. To the extent that Johnson regarded an essay, as "a loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece," his *Ramblers* and *Adventurers* were free to range across topics without having to meet the demands of intertextual coherence expected in a long work (*Dictionary*, ESSAY n.s. 2). In the *Plan* for his *Dictionary*, dedicated to Lord Chesterfield and thus shaped by the conventions of dedications, the dedicator's ethos was constrained by the real social action and norms enacted in the document. In the essays, however, minor offences against decorum, or changes of opinion from one essay to another, might be excused as indulgences of the genre, as exercises of fancy rather than firm professions of firm principle. Even though, as has been noted, Johnson's acquaintances soon foiled his desire to keep his authorship secret, Johnson concluded his *Rambler* essays by noting in *Rambler* 208 that "'A mask,' says Castiglione, 'confers a right of acting and speaking with less restraint, even when the wearer happens to be known.' He that is discovered without his own consent, may claim some indulgence, and cannot be rigorously called to justify those sallies or frolicks which his disguise must

prove him desirous to conceal."[161] The anonymity of the essays allows Johnson to practice public self-fashioning while writing behind the mask of the *Rambler* or *Adventurer*'s persona. Moreover, in essays Johnson occasionally wrote under pseudonyms and addressed "TO THE RAMBLER," he could enlarge upon topics without being personally identified with the viewpoints expressed by his fictional correspondents. Though Johnson "always thought it the duty of an anonymous author to write, as if he expected to be hereafter known," their official anonymity insulates Johnson from being "rigorously called to justify those sallies or frolicks" that he there indulged.[162]

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One of Johnson's recurring rhetorical techniques in the essays is to model a process of ethical ratiocination for his readers, to approach ethical questions by taking moral commonplaces and then examining their validity by using contrary vices or errors as tools of discrimination.[163] Johnson's practice has classical precedent, notably in Aristotle's discussion in his *Nicomachean Ethics* of arriving at the "mean" of moral virtue that lies somewhere between "excess and deficiency." Thus, in "feelings of fear

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[161] "Introduction," Yale *Works*, III, xxv; *Rambler* 208 (14 March 1752), Yale *Works*, V, 317-18. Of the 208 Ramblers, only four (30, 44, 97, 100), and parts of three others (15b, 107b, and the billets in 10), were not written by Johnson. See "Introduction", Yale *Works*, III, xxi, n. 1.

[162] *Rambler* 208, V, 318.

[163] Johnson's examination of moral commonplaces is discussed as a "dismantling of commonplaces" by Leopold Damrosch, Jr., in "Johnson's Manner of Proceeding in the *Rambler*," *ELH* 40 (1973): 71-2; and as "deconstructive" by Lynn, 470. Both Damrosch and Lynn view Johnson's sometimes abrubt turns in the *Ramblers* as a conscious part of Johnson's didactic purposes in the essays, whereas Paul Fussell reads these turns as the result of Johnson's hasty method of composing the essays; Lynn challenges the traditional view of Johnson writing many Ramblers with a printer's boy waiting at the door. Alan T. McKenzie argues that Johnson's use of opposites, "too numerous and obvious to require elaboration," was encouraged by a longstanding "system" of discriminating among passions that was familiar to "Augustan humanists and their readers." The "system," McKenzie writes, "that established the differences between these passions encouraged opposition, both psychological and syntactic, as a tool of this discrimination." See "The Systematic Scrutiny of Passion in Johnson's *Rambler*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1986-1987): 134-35.

and confidence courage is the mean." A "man who exceeds in confidence is reckless, and a man who exceeds in fear and is deficient in confidence is cowardly."[164] Likewise in Horace, "There is a measure in all things. There are, in short, fixed bounds, beyond and short of which right can find no place."[165] Yet Aristotle admits that "there appears to be a certain similarity between some extremes and their median, e.g., recklessness resembles courage and extravagance generosity."[166] Cicero, in his *De Inventione*, notes that "diffidence is the opposite of confidence, and is therefore a vice; temerity is not opposite to courage, but borders on it and is akin to it, and yet is a vice. In a similar way each virtue will be found to have a vice bordering upon it. . . . All of these as well as the opposites of good qualities will be classed among things to be avoided."[167]

In two of his most significant moral writings before the *Rambler* essays, *The Vision of Theodore* (1748) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), Johnson figures ethical choice as a struggle to maintain a path between problematic opposites and avoid being beset by various "snares." In "Vanity," Johnson portrays "the clouded maze of fate" as "o'erspread with snares" by "hope and fear, desire and hate." "Wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride," treads "the dreary paths" of life "without a guide," shunning "fancied ills" and chasing "airy good" (lines 5-8, 10). In the *Vision of Theodore*, an allegory written for publication in *The Preceptor*, Johnson's narrator

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[164] Book II, Chs. 6 and 7 of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 42, 45.
[165] Horace, *Satires*, I.1.106-07: "[E]st modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines, / quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum."
[166] Aristotle, *Ethics*, trans. Ostwald, 49.
[167] Cicero, *De Inventione*, II. 54. 165: "[F]identiae contrarium est diffidentia et ea re vitium est; audacia non contrarium, sed appositum est ac propinquam et tamen vitium est. Sic uni cuique virtuti finitimum vitium reperietur. . . . Quae omnia item uti contraria rerum bonarum in rebus vitandis reponentur." Trans. H. M. Hubbell (London & Cambridge, Mass.: William Heinemann, 1949), 333.

observes a traveller on "the road of Happiness," who, "when the Passions or Appetites which had before seduced him, made their approach," and when "Habit" pushed "him toward them," the "wretch thus impelled on one side, and allured on the other, too frequently quitted the road of Happiness, to which, after his second deviation from it, he rarely returned."[168] "All those who determined to follow either Reason or Religion were continually importuned to forsake the road, sometimes by Passions, and sometimes by Appetites, of whom both had reason to boast the success of their artifices; for so many were drawn into bypaths, that any way was more populous than the right."[169] Lawrence Lipking argues that the moral lessons Johnson imparts in the *Vision* crucially "inform his later work."[170] In the context of my own argument, the *Vision* employs, in a cohesive account, the terms of Johnson's didactic writing that he employs, or modifies, again and again to trace the path to virtue, obstacles to that path, and the consequences of losing sight of the path: Passions, Appetites, Habits, Reason, Innocence, experience (not personified), Education, Religion and her emissary Conscience, the regions of Desire, the caverns of Despair, the bowers of Content, the maze of Indolence.

In *Rambler* 25, Johnson notes that it "ought to be the constant endeavour of every reasonable being" to "walk with circumspection and steadiness in the right path, at an

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[168] "The Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, Found in His Cell," in *Rasselas and Other Tales*, ed. Gwin J. Kolb, vol. XVI of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 195.
[169] "Vision of Theodore," in Yale *Works*, XVI, 205.
[170] Lipking argues that Johnson modeled the *Vision*'s "organization of human life as a journey through successive temptations to a promised, if almost inaccessible, end" on The Table of Cebes, an ancient allegorical fable traditionally attributed to a "friend of Socrates." See Lipking, "Learning to Read Johnson: *The Vision of Theodore* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*," *ELH* 43 (1976): 521, 527.

equal distance between the extremes of error" (*Rambler* 25, III, 137). As well, Johnson observes that there

> are some vices and errors, which, though often fatal to those in whom they are found, have yet, by the universal consent of mankind, been considered as entitled to some degreee of respect, or have, at least, been exempted from contemptuous infamy, and condemned by the severest moralists with pity rather than detestation. A constant and invariable example of this general partiality will be found in the different regard which always been shown to rashness and cowardice, two vices, of which, though they may be conceived equally distant from the middle point, where true fortitude is placed, and may equally injure any publick or private interest, yet the one is never mentioned without some kind of veneration, and the other always considered as a topick of unlimited and licentious censure, on which all the virulence of reproach may be lawfully exerted. (*Rambler* 25 III, 136)

By walking through the process of ethical reasoning, and by establishing tools of ethical discrimination, Johnson models the process, and identifies the hazards, of moral reasoning. Opposing vices provide points of excess and deficiency by which to judge one's own behavior in individual cases, and "reason" and "experience" stand as touchstones used to test the rational and practical advisability of a particular action. These tools and tests help one trace the path of virtue, even when it is clouded by the inordinate emphasis placed by moralists or public opinion on one side of the mean. As didactic literature, Johnson's essays model for the autodidact replicable methods of ethical deliberation. Johnson reminds readers of what tools are at their disposal for self-regulation, and for Mr. Rambler, even a "vicious moralist" by "whose writings the heart is rectified, the appetites counter-acted, and the passions repressed, may be considered as not unprofitable to the great republick of humanity, even though his behaviour should not always exemplify his rules" (*Rambler* 77, IV, 41). "He . . . that would govern his actions by the laws of virtue, must regulate his thoughts by those of reason" (*Rambler* 8, III, 46).

Johnson portrays such regulation as the inevitable aspect of the postlapsarian "condition upon which we are to pass our time." Mr. Rambler urges readers to make use of those

> superior principles by which the force of external agents may be counteracted, and the temporary prevalance of passions restrained. Nature will indeed always operate, human desires will always be ranging; but these motions, though very powerful, are not resistless; nature may be regulated, and desires governed; and to contend with the predominance of successive passions, and to be endangered by one affection, and then another, is the condition upon which we are to pass our time, the time of our preparation for that state which shall put an end to experiment, to disappointment, to change. (*Rambler* 151, V, 42)

By means of self-regulation, one may counteract the "force of external agents," restrain passions, resist powerful desires.

But while Johnson models ethical ratiocination in the essays, he often exhibits skepticism about the mind's abilities, possessing perhaps "a mind taught by experience to distrust itself."[171] The very process of self-estimation, especially when it involves self-defense or self-vindication, is potentially compromised by one's capacity for self-delusion, since followers of the "Passions" march "at first in a path nearly in the same direction with that of Reason and Religion; . . . deviated by slow degrees," they ultimately change course.[172] On one hand, "every man" must estimate his capacity for taking on particular tasks, "since a genius" is "only to be produced by collision with a proper subject, it is the business of every man to try whether his faculties may not happily co-operate with his desires" (*Rambler* 25, III, 139). On the other hand, "no estimate is more in danger of erroneous calculations than those by which a man computes the force of his own genius" (*Rambler* 54, V, 55). Once a task is completed, "we are blinded in

[171] "Vision of Theodore," in Yale *Works*, XVI, 196.
[172] "Vision of Theodore," in Yale *Works*, XVI, 205.

examining our own labours by innumerable prejudices" (*Rambler* 21, III, 120). Even if one uses "reason and reflection" and determines "to exert the latent force that nature may have reposited in him," (*Rambler* 129, IV, 324), those who regulate their thoughts by reason must "remember that the pleasures of fancy, and the emotions of desire are more dangerous as they are more hidden, since they escape the awe of observation, and operate equally in every situation, without the concurrence of external opportunities" (*Rambler* 8, III, 46). Once one begins through pride to vindicate one's errors, "such pride, once indulged, too frequently operates upon more important objects, and inclines men not only to vindicate their errors, but their vices" (*Rambler* 31, III, 171). Johnson uses rhetorical, lexical, and syntactic oppositions within the essays, both to determine ethical and pious action on his own part, and to model autodidactic self-regulation for his readers. The argument of the essay proceeds by demonstrating the value of opposition and counteraction as a tool for determining action**.**[173]

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Just as a kind of dialectic is seen within individual essays—in which Johnson employs antitheses that he often formally resolves at the end of the essay in what Steven Lynn terms a call to action— another, less fully resolved dialectic of counteraction plays out across the body of the essays. Freed by the periodical format to "indulge the sallies" of his "own imagination" (*Rambler* 23, III, 129), and not as obliged, as in the individual essays, to resolve contradictions for rhetorical purposes, Johnson's essays are recurring, autodidactic meditations on the exigencies of the writer, the projector, and those who

[173] McKenzie, "The Systematic Scrutiny of Passion," 134.

viewed themselves, vainly or not, as laborers of learning, doing work seen as benefiting the greater good. Perhaps influenced by his growing sense that he would have to present his *Dictionary*, if he should complete it, without the protection of a patron, Johnson at some level seems to consider in these essays the proper response to his own exigencies: his methodological setbacks, his slow progress, his lack of public social status or academic degree, his lack of support from a patron despite his endeavors.

Insulated by the mask of Mr. Rambler and often by voice of his fictional correspondents, Johnson examines exigencies on different sides, and in effect, if not by design, the messages of some essays counteract each other—or at least modify each other. Scholars have various ways of addressing the inconsistencies one can find both within individual *Ramblers* and across the body of these essays. Paul Fussell finds in them signs of hasty writing and existential drift. Paul Fussell has emphasized inconsistency in Johnson's *Ramblers*, noting that "for all his pretences to know where he is, Johnson is adrift."[174] The essays, for Fussell, are "dynamic enterprises in which real doubts and uncertainties are constantly at war with the mere appearance of order and faith."[175] Leopold Damrosch, Jr., finds inconsistencies only natural given the nature of the essays as a loose collection. He argues against viewing the essays as a "uniform repository of Johnsonian wisdom" and against imposing coherence on a body of what he views as "a very loosely organized collection." Yet Damrosch finds seeming inconsistencies *within* essays as part of Johnson's didactic purpose as a moral writer: "Johnson often leads deliberately toward a platitude and then turns on us without

[174] Fussell, *Johnson and the Life of Writing*, 178.
[175] Ibid., 160-61.

warning, in order to show us how uncritical our thinking usually is. . . . The heart of Johnson's mission as a moralist is to make us stop parroting the precepts of moralists and start thinking for ourselves."[176]

Inconsistencies have long been a concern of Johnson scholars. Over fifty years ago, James Clifford wrote that "much of our difficulty in understanding and appreciating Johnson stems from his own lack of consistency."[177] Bertrand Bronson famously traced the "root of most of his inconsistencies" to "two forces, the conservatism of intellectual attitude and the ebullient temperament."[178] Yet Donald Greene asks, "Does ...an internal contradiction really exist in Johnson, or does the hypothesis spring from a failure fully to understand one or the other of the two allegedly conflicting elements in Johnson's thought?"[179] Steven Lynn, arguing against a long tradition of describing Johnson's methods in the *Ramblers* as exploratory grasping for truth, has argued for a view of the essays as more coherent than searching, that "in his writing Johnson ultimately wants to convey the truth to readers, not discover it for himself."[180]

But we should examine Johnson's inconsistencies, when they exist, with a consideration of the rhetorical situation, the constraints and freedoms allowed to the genre, and their occurrence within the span of Johnson's career. In the case of the *Ramblers*, Johnson's professed didactic aims led him to close many *individual* essays

[176] Damrosch, Jr., "Johnson's Manner of Proceeding," 71, 81.
[177] James L. Clifford, "A Survey of Johnsonian Studies, 1887-1950," abridged, and with a new postscript, in *Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Donald J. Greene (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 46-61; originally printed, without abridgement, in Clifford's *Johnsonian Studies, 1887-1950* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1951), 1-16.
[178] Bertrand H. Bronson, "Johnson Agonistes," in *Johnson Agonistes and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), 1-52. Bronson's essay can also be found in Greene's collection of essays, *Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 30-45
[179] "Introduction," in Greene, *Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 8.
[180] Lynn, "Johnson's Rambler and Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," 465.

with a "call" to action, as Lynn has described it, but the fact that the essay form allowed for "sallies of the imagination" as Johnson described them, and the fact that he often spoke through the voice of fictional correspondents, means that Johnson may not have required rigorous consistency of himself across the body of the essays, even if he tried to ensure that at least those essays that were "professedly serious" could be "found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age" (*Rambler* 208, V, 320).

If Johnson employs counteraction within individual essays to model ethical reasoning for his readers, he employs counteraction across the body of the essays as a way to seek practical wisdom that he can apply to his own exigencies. So Johnson's comments on patronage in the essays, for instance, do not simply represent Johnson's unitary views on that institution. Yet they are not, on the other hand, randomly inconsistent manifestations of contrary impulses either. These comments, like all of Johnson's comments on authorial exigencies in these essays, are part of a dialectic of practical wisdom that is synthesized and temporarily arrested in the Preface, where Johnson finds himself in a position to apply the wisdom he tries to inculcate to others in the essays. Across the body of these essays, Johnson calibrates his own responses to his awkward position in the changing 18th-century literary economy as a man engaged in "the labours of learning" (*Rambler* 180, V, 183). Johnson then reflects on his own status as an independent man of learning, merit and ability, who was bereft of a patron and producing a highly ambitious work or learning that was also bookseller's project for the

market.[181] Johnson's experience in preparing the *Dictionary* underscored his awkward position amid the worlds of patronage, market, and academia.The periodical format, the mask, the ability to assume the voice of various fictional correspondents were all aspects of the essay form that allowed Johnson to employ the heuristic of moral self-counteraction in the pursuit of authorial choices that were practical, wise, and morally defensible.

Thus we see Johnson criticize patrons in one essay and mitigate their faults in another. In *Rambler* 91, the allegorized "Sciences, after a thousand indignities, retired from the palace of Patronage, and having long wandered over the world in grief and distress, were led at last to the cottage of Independence," where "they were taught by Prudence and Parsimony to support themselves in dignity and quiet" (*Rambler* 91, IV, 120). During the previous month, however, Mr. Rambler had noted that "many have dared to boast of neglected merit, and to challenge their age for cruelty and folly, of whom it cannot be alledged that they have endeavoured to increase the wisdom or virtue of their readers" (*Rambler* 77, IV, 42). *Rambler* 163 returns to a critique of patronage, noting that "none of the cruelties exercised by wealth and power upon indigence and dependance, is more mischievous in its consequences, or more frequently practised with wanton negligence, than the encouragement of expectations which are never to be gratified, and the elation and depression of the heart by needless vicissitudes of hope and

[181] Here I depart from Raman Selden's observation that in the essays Johnson allows "the principles and conceptual oppositions of his thought…emerge in a less repressed form" than in his other writings. Selden refers to oppositions within single essays. I include oppositions across the essays, and I argue that many of Johnson's oppositions, in Freudian terms, reflect not the emergence of an id, but an ongoing encounter between id and superego as Johnson develops his authorial ego. See Raman Selden, "Deconstructing the *Ramblers*," *Fresh Reflections on Samuel Johnson: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Prem Nath (Troy, NY: Whitston, 1987), 281.

disappointment" (*Rambler* 163, V, 100). Mr. Rambler illustrates this critique with an image of the "punishment of Tantalus in the infernal regions," (*Rambler* 163, V, 101) suggesting that this "image of misery was perhaps originally suggested to some poet by the conduct of his patron, by the daily contemplation of splendor which he never must partake, by fruitless attempts to catch at interdicted happiness, and by the sudden evanescence of his reward, when he thought his labours almost at an end" (*Rambler* 163, V, 102). If Johnson critiques those who "have dared to boast of neglected merit" (*Rambler* 77, IV, 42) in one essay, in another he excoriates the "wanton negligence" and the "cruelties exercised by wealth and power upon indigence and dependence" (*Rambler* 163, V, 100).

In *Rambler* 149, presented as a letter from the fictional correspondent Hyperdulus to Mr. Rambler, examines what might constitute the proper response to a benefactor whose actions do not inspire gratitude. Hyperdulus, having spent much of his time in a "dependant state," has consequently "received many favours in the opinion of those at whose expense I have been maintained; yet I do not feel in my heart any burning gratitude or tumultuous affection" (*Rambler* 149, V, 28). In this essay, Johnson, through the story of a youth's shabby treatment from the uncle who takes him and his orphaned sister in, can explore the general principles of virtuous action that presumably govern behavior in the patron-client relationship: beneficence on the part of the patron, and gratitude on the part of the client. Moreover, the letter raises the question of how much gratitude is owed to a benefactor, when the quality of beneficence is in question.

Hyperdulus begins his letter by acknowledging his awareness that ingratitude is looked at severely by society.

> No depravity of the mind has been more frequently or justly censured than ingratitude. There is indeed sufficient reason for looking on those that can return evil for good, and repay kindness and assistance with hatred or neglect, as corrupted beyond the common degrees of wickedness; nor will he who has once been clearly detected in acts of injury to his benefactor, deserve to be numbered among social beings; he has endeavoured to destroy confidence, to intercept sympathy, and to turn every man's attention wholly on himself. (*Rambler* 149, V, 28).

But after asking what behavior is appropriate on the part of the client, Hyperdulus, perhaps speaking for Johnson, examines the behavior of patrons, whose behavior satisfies vanity under the guise of altruism: "[P]erhaps if these patrons and protectors were confronted with any whom they boast of having befriended, it would often appear that they consulted only their pleasure or vanity, and repaid themselves their petty donatives by gratifications of insolence and indulgence of contempt" (*Rambler* 149, V, 28). Then after enumerating the indignities he and his sister, treated with "licentious brutality" by the host family's heir, Hyperdulus poses a question that seems to answer itself—that contains both his charge against the host and his own defense and against the charge of ingratitude:

> I beg to be informed, Mr. Rambler, how much we can be supposed to owe beneficence which pollutes its gifts with contumely, and may be truly said to pander to pride? I would willingly be told, whether insolence does not reward its own liberalities, and whether he that exacts servility, can with justice at the same time expect affection (*Rambler* 149, V, 32).

Hyperdulus's language at the end suggests that his question is merely rhetorical, that he already has vindicated himself in his own mind.

But if Hyperdulus's account of his own situation, along with his own disapproval of ingratitude, seems to vindicate him from the charge of ingratitude, the epigraph appended to the text's beginning and his very name in the closing salutation together serve as a kind of outer frame to the text, and they serve to counteract, or at least complicate each other. The motto, which often comments on or frames the text of the *Rambler* essays, is in this case a text from Martial, and concludes with what may constitute Mr. Rambler's advice to benefactors, "Love—if you wou'd be lov'd again" (*Rambler* 149, V, 27).[182]

While the motto admonishes neglectful benefactors, the correspondent's pseudonym, read against that motto, suggests that he should redirect his mind. As with many names of the Johnson's fictional *Rambler* correspondents, the name Hyperdulus has chosen (via Johnson) serves as an unintentionally ironic self-critique.[183] Throughout the essays, the irony of a correspondent's presumably self-chosen pseudonym, placed at the end of the essay, often functions like a punch line, characterizing or reversing what comes before; and the irony of the name contributes to the moral of the story. The etymology of Hyperdulus's name not only conveys his own sense of abject servitude, but also suggests that Hyperdulus has little sense of gratitude for his divine benefactor. The Greek *doulos*, slave, is used by Christian apostles to describe their relationship to Jesus, and in the context of describing a slave as having only one true master, wherein God is

[182] Here I use the 18th-century English translation for *ut ameris, ama*, included in Yale *Works*, V, 27.
[183] For examples other than Hyperdulus, see Edward A. Bloom, "Symbolic Names in Johnson's Periodical Essays," *MLQ* 13 (1952): 333-52.

master (*kyrios*).[184] Furthermore, in Thomas Aquinas's formulation of proper veneration, *hyperdulia* refers to veneration for the Virgin Mary.[185] For the Anglican Johnson and for Protestant readers, such a connection may suggest that Hyperdulus's energies are misplaced. If Hyperdulus explains away his own ingratitude quite easily in his own account of things, the epigraph and name, which frame the text, serve as subtle moral counterpoints to Hyperdulus's complaints.

Read against these contexts, his name, if it imparts any moral at all, suggests that the question of gratitude as a social obligation should be subsumed under the larger question of gratitude toward one's divine benefactor. The name Hyperdulus suggests that Mr. Rambler's correspondent has overestimated the degree of his own bondage. Thus the name Johnson chooses for his correspondent suggests the way Hyperdulus might examine his condition from a broader perspective. Hyperdulus's choice of a pseudonym is, in itself, as hyperbolic as his claims of injustice in the essay, which can be read throughout as magnified through the lens of Hyperdulus's consciousness that he is superior to those in his adopted family who are socially superior to him. Thus, for Hyperdulus, incivilities become grave injustices. Hyperdulus's self-description as a *doulos*, or slave, is hyperbolic; his condition is, perhaps, less severe than he imagines, and in the process of overemphasizing his slavery he forgets where gratitude ultimately should be directed. Hyperdulus also seems to ignore the possibility that he has not learned any lessons from the example of his mother, a woman who "had no pleasure but

[184] The term "servants of Christ Jesus" in the salutation to Philippians 1:1 (NRSV) is an example of this figuration. Among other places, see also James 1:1; 2 Peter 1: 1; Jude 1: 1; Revelations 1:1.
[185] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd Part of 2nd Part, Question 103, Article 4.

in dress, equipage, assemblies, and compliments" who, "finding" after the death of her husband "that she could live no longer in her accustomed rank, sunk into dejection, and in two years wore out her life with envy and discontent" (Rambler 149, V, 29). Having only 'one true master,' as the Biblical figuration goes, Hyperdulus should direct his gratitude toward is divine benefactor, for the sake of piety and peace of mind.

Whether or not Johnson was thinking this early about the Preface he would have to write for the Dictionary, he would at some point have to decide whether or not his Preface, and the *Dictionary*'s lack of a dedication, would be seen as, or count as, ingratitude. This counterbalancing effect within *Rambler* 149, a perhaps indirect critique of patrons through the voice of one of Mr. Rambler's correspondents, who himself is ironized, allows Johnson, insulated from the essay's statements by the masks of Hyperdulus and Mr. Rambler, to critique benefactors (who themselves should love if they would be loved again) in quite bald terms. If Johnson critiques patronage in some essays, he examines his own complaints, or qualifies them, just he does those of Hyperdulus. And this self-examination often takes the form of counteraction or a turning over of his declarations to examine them from different perspectives.

Johnson's criticism of benefactors or patronage in some essays is counterbalanced both within the essay, as in *Rambler* 149, or across the body of the essays. So for all of Johnson's complaints against patrons and patronage, he recognized that "the miseries of the learned have been related by themselves; and since they have not been found exempt from that partiality with which men look upon their own actions and sufferings, we may conclude that they have not forgotten to deck their cause with the brightest ornaments,

and strongest colours" (*Rambler* 77, IV, 39). Johnson will observe, writing as correspondent T in *The Adventurer* 138, the somewhat arbitrary processes and forces by which books are assessed, noting that "whoever has remarked the fate of books, must have found it governed by other causes, than general consent arising from general conviction. If a new performance happens not to fall into the hands of some, who have courage to tell, and authority to propagate their opinion, it often remains long in obscurity, and perhaps perishes unknown and unexamined." Yet unlike Hyperdulus Johnson offers a larger view, offering palliation in the fact that such is the human condition, which consists of "miseries of life," as well as its "lenitives and abatements." Johnson ends *Adventurer* 138, the last one he wrote, by writing, "Upon the whole, as the author seems to share all the common miseries of life, he appears to partake likewise of its lenitives and abatements" (*Adventurer* 138, II, 496-97).

Johnson, then, counteracts moments of pride, or peevish complaint, with moments of resignation, with gestures of faith. Thus on the subject of desiring reputation, Mr. Rambler concludes, in No. 159, that the "utmost which we can reasonably hope or fear is to fill a vacant hour with prattle, and be forgotten" (*Rambler* 159, V, 84). Yet in *Rambler* 203, five months later, Mr. Rambler makes the same arguments he has already made elsewhere in the essays about the improbability and evanescence of reputation, but concludes with a different tone and message:

> It is not therefore from this world, that any ray of comfort can proceed, to cheer the gloom of the last hour. But futurity still has its prospects; there is yet happiness in reserve, which, if we transfer our attention to it, will support us in the pains of disease, and the languor of decay. This happiness we may expect with confidence, because it is out of the power of chance, and may be attained by all that sincerely desire and earnestly pursue it. On this therefore every mind ought

> finally to rest. Hope is the chief blessing of man, and that hope only is rational, of which we are certain that it cannot deceive us. (*Rambler* 203, V, 295)

It is impossible to make any confident claim about how conscious this process of counterbalancing across the essays was, but Johnson's (or Mr. Rambler's) explicit advice on self-regulation, suggest that the recurrence of counterbalancing claims, within individual essays, and across the body of essays, was no accident. We can even observe this habit of moral self-regulation in a letter Johnson wrote to his friend Thomas Warton less than a month before the *Dictionary*'s publication. Johnson, anticipating the impending reception of his work, begins to complain and pulls back, regulating himself. "[W]hat will be its fate I know not nor much think because thinking is to no purpose. It must stand the censures of *the great vulgar and the small*, of those that understand it and that understand it not. But in all this I suffer not alone, every writer has the same difficulties, and perhaps every writer talks of them more than he thinks."[186]

Johnson's habit of self-regulation through the examination of opposites and through self-counteraction both within essays and across the body of the essays allows him to approach the issue of gratitude both in his Preface and in his letter to Chesterfield with well-considered notions of how to act. Even if individual essays are structured, as Lynn argues, ultimately to "convey truth to readers, not discover it for himself," Johnson's examination of the various sides of his own literary exigencies allows him to practice the practical wisdom he tries to articulate in those essays when he must apply

[186] *Letters* (25 March 1755) I, 101, italics in the original, referring to Cowley's version of Horace's ode III.1. See *ibid*., n. 6.

that wisdom to his own rhetorical choices.[187] Johnson's rhetorical choices were adopted with the full knowledge that they were social choices with real-world consequences, and at some level, moral choices, with consequences for his state of mind and his position, ultimately, as a divine subject. Johnson writes the *Ramblers* and *Adventurers*, then, in the tradition of *phronesis*, and he applies his deliberations of practical wisdom and moral philosophy therein to the Preface.

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Days after the *Dictionary* was published, Johnson's friend Thomas Warton wrote his brother Joseph that the Preface was "noble," yet he also feared it would "disgust, by the expressions of his consciousness of superiority, and of his contempt of patronage."[188] While Johnson's infamous letter to Chesterfield has long symbolized the author's independence from patronage, most of Johnson's contemporaries would have read the Preface with little knowledge of the conflict, apart from Johnson's assertion that "the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great."[189] In pursuing a mean between dignity and modesty, Johnson's

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[187] Lynn, 466.

[188] (19 April 1755) *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, ed. David Fairer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 43.

[189] John J. Burke, Jr. points out that that the story of the conflict "remained part of the oral tradition for many years before versions of it began to appear in print. . . .The first account in print of the 1755 quarrel can be found in a piece by Isaac Reed that appeared in the *Westminster Magazine* in 1774, almost twenty years later." See "The Originality of Boswell's Version of Johnson's Quarrel with Lord Chesterfield," *New Light on Boswell: Critical and Historical Essays on the Occasion of the Bicentenary of* The Life of Johnson, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 145-46. Lawrence Lipking suggests that by showing the letter to friends and acquaintances Johnson and Chesterfield both helped "set off a public buzz that would sell many books," *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, 14. It's difficult to know, of course, how much such activities would reverberate among the national reading public. I argue that any such buzz around the time of the *Dictionary*'s publication would have been more due to the Preface. The declaration of independence in the Preface was a public affront to Chesterfield, whose association with the *Dictionary* was publicly reiterated when Chesterfield puffed the *Dictionary* in the

"defensive pride" perhaps strays beyond the mean in ways that contributed enduringly to his public persona. Johnson's seeming ingratitude to Chesterfield and apparent "contempt of patronage" was partly responsible for the notion, later discredited by Boswell, that Johnson was the unnamed man whom Chesterfield labels a "respectable Hottentot." A number of early biographies of Johnson excerpt the Chesterfield letter, which describes an uncouth man of "moral character" and "deep learning":

> There is a man, whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. . . . Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mis-times or mis-places every thing. He disputes with heat, and indiscriminately. Mindless of the rank, character, and situation of those with whom he disputes, absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity or respect, he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals, and his inferiors; and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him, is to consider him a respectable Hottentot.[190]

Even though Boswell later discredits the attribution of this portrait to Johnson, the image of Johnson as a "respectable Hottentot" circulated for years among readers of such early biographies.

Johnson's independence, often admired by modern readers, constituted a social and perhaps ethical breach for eighteenth-century readers. The first early biography of Johnson to include the "respectable Hottentot" letter offers it as evidence for "singular manners of the Doctor," who "has ever affected a singularity in his manners, and to

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World in late 1754, and when the consortium of booksellers financing the *Dictionary* made free copies of the *Plan* of the *Dictionary* (dedicated to Chesterfield) available at their bookshops.

[190] I cite the letter as quoted in Isaac Reed, "An Impartial Account of the Life, Character, Genius, and Writings, of Dr. Samuel Johnson" (1774). The biography originally appears in *Westminster Magazine* 2 (September 1774), 443-46; quoted here from *The Early Biographies of Samuel Johnson*, ed. O M Brack, Jr. and Robert E. Kelley (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1974), 17.

contemn the social rules which are established in the intercourse of civil life."[191] But if Johnson "contemned" social rules, he only did so after calibrating the social and ethical consequences of his self-presentation in his periodical essays. He had already considered in *Rambler* 166, for example, the consequences for a person "whose confidence of merit incites him to meet without any sense of inferiority the eyes of those who flattered themselves with their own dignity" (*Rambler* 166, V, 117). Such a person might be considered as "an insolent leveller, impatient of the just prerogatives of rank and wealth, eager to usurp the station to which he has no right, and to confound the subordinations of society" (*Ibid*.). Through such calibrations, worked out through the moral and rhetorical counteractions of the essays, Johnson developed ethical yet practical grounds for self-representation. It was through such exercises of ethical deliberation that Johnson rehearsed the public ethos he would use in the Preface, his first effort to fashion himself as an independent man of letters.

III. Johnson Enkrates*: The Ethos of the Folio Preface*

In writing the Preface, the first document in which he addressed the public directly as Samuel Johnson, and which was, up to that point in his career, the most important single piece of writing consequential to his career, Johnson follows the moral, ethical, and rhetorical advice he gives writers in his periodical essays—he tries to achieve a virtuous mean between presumption and timidity. The moral self-counteraction he urges and practices in these essays become both principles of rhetorical arrangement and the basis of his ethos in the Preface. As a result, Johnson counterbalances humble

[191] Ibid., 17.

admissions of fault with indirect yet grand, even aggressive, self-praise, thereby effecting a presumptively justifiable "defensive pride." Here Johnson aims at a kind of rhetorical golden mean, trying to find the middle path of courage between temerity and timorous prudence, as he had advises in so many of his periodical essays. Partly to substitute for the lack of protection a patron might have granted to his *Dictionary*, Johnson adopts a rhetorical strategy wherein he counterbalances preemptive self-defense with indirect but grand self-praise. Johnson avoids the appearance of an immodest, self-interested hack by crafting his Preface into a kind of text act—an act of *pietas*, self-sacrifice, and self-control in which Johnson justifies his ways to God and country by enumerating his discouragements, his temptations, the difficulty of his tasks, as well as his labor, his application, his "anxious diligence," his "persevering activity" (para. 74). Thus Johnson tries to demonstrate the social usefulness of a work—even if it fails to meet its originally stated goals, while at the same time demanding that immediate and obvious utility, in terms of the marketplace, not be the standard by which his work is measured.

In his classic essay, "Johnson Agonistes," Bertrand H. Bronson writes that the "pattern of Johnson's temperament, far from being cut to fit the classical Golden Mean, tended everywhere to the volcanic."[192] Bronson posits an analogue between Johnson's "aggressive physical courage," his "athletic" "style of expression," as well as his "forcible and violent" "character and manners."[193] Johnson is a "born fighter" who "will swim instinctively against the current, whose forces are naturally called into play by opposition and difficulty"; who, "with instinctive satisfaction of imperious inner

[192] "Johnson Agonistes," 3.
[193] "Johnson Agonistes," 2, 43, and 4; these last terms are Boswell's; see *Life*, IV, 72.

compulsions . . . grappled with a world in which joy was three parts pain, grimly but somehow exultantly fighting the good fight, determined never to capitulate."[194] Bronson's account is consistent with Johnson's descriptions of himself in the Preface as a kind of Herculean scholarly laborer grappling with the language, dispatched on "fortuitous and unguided excursions into books" and "the boundless chaos of a living speech" (Preface, para. 28). Bronson's portrait of Johnson as *agonistes* foregrounds "the ferment and tumult of Johnson's nature" but obscures the Johnson who sought to control that ferment and tumult, the Johnson whose temperament perhaps may not have been "cut to fit the classical Golden Mean," but who so frequently sought in the essays to tread the "middle path" with the aid of moral self-regulation, and who wrote that "to subdue passion and regulate desire, is the great task of man as a moral agent."[195] However "forcible and violent" the "character and manners" of Johnson may have sometimes seemed to some, in his writing Johnson's character and manners were more susceptible to control—both moral and rhetorical. And in the Preface, a crucial document of self-fashioning for Johnson, self-control constitutes the basis for Johnson's ethos of moral virtue. Johnson's Preface shows him striving, but ultimately coming to terms with his limits; pursuing grand desires, but contracting his designs. In both its rhetorical manner of disposition and its predominant ethos, the Preface embodies not merely the exuberance and energy of the *agonistes*, but the courageous self-restraint of the *enkrates*, who in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* is the figure of moral strength who controls passions,

[194] "Johnson Agonistes," 42, 6, 52.
[195] "Johnson Agonistes," 6, 3; Samuel Johnson, "Sermon 18," *Sermons*. The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson. Vol. XIV. Jean Hagstrum and James Gray, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 193.

but not without struggle. In contrast to the *agonistes*, the struggles of the *enkrates* are with the self. In the Preface, Johnson conspicuously displays these struggles for the reader. An ethos of moral struggle and self-control was both practical and pious, since it avoids a professional ethos of unseemly self-advocacy, and allows Johnson to let his struggles for virtue, rather than the merits of his *Dictionary*, stand as the final test of his labors. After examining in this section Johnson's rhetorical strategies in the Preface, I show how Johnson's famous dismissal of the *Dictionary* with "frigid tranquillity" is an emphatic, final display of Johnson's moral struggle and self-control. Finally, I conclude by arguing that our awareness of the rhetoric of the Preface should lead us to temper our reliance on the Preface for Johnson's views on language.

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Unlike the dedicator who might enumerate the "encouragements" offered by the patron, Johnson takes his reader through his discouragements, his challenges, and his impediments, thereby making the demands of his task and the intellectual rigor it required explicit for the reader.[196] By displaying these intellectual challenges so dramatically he demonstrates why he is no mere drudge. At the same time, by rhetorically amplifying his intellectual challenges, Johnson provides the basis for judging his performance in the *Dictionary* as virtuous, if imperfect. Thus Johnson "attempted a dictionary of the *English*

[196] Howard Weinbrot notes that in emphasizing his *own* attempts to create order from the disorder of language Johnson "comments obliquely on his former patron;" "Samuel Johnson's *Plan* and Preface to The *Dictionary*: The Growth of a Lexicographer's Mind," in *New Aspects of Lexicography: Literary Criticism, Intellectual History, and Social Change*, ed. Howard D. Weinbrot (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 86-7. Dustin Griffin discusses what he calls the "cultural economics of literary patronage" and the customary eighteenth-century terms, including "encouragement"—a term Johnson uses three times, in one form or another, in Johnson's letter to Chesterfield—used to describe the "symbolic capital" exchanged between patrons and writers. See Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England*., Ch. 2.

language," despite the "discouragement" traditionally afforded the lexicographer, "who can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted to very few." Johnson approaches a language that "has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance; resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion; and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation." From the beginning, Johnson highly dramatizes his labors, in which he undertakes a task previously left to the mercy of chance, time, fashion, ignorance, and caprice.[197]

Through rhetorical amplification, Johnson dramatizes his lexicography as an encounter with wild nature, finding "our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules; wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection." In Johnson's dramatic rendering, he is utterly alone in the face of wild nature. But despite this daunting state of affairs, Johnson "applied myself to the perusal of our writers," having "no assistance but from general grammar." Having accumulated "in time the materials of a dictionary," Johnson "reduced" them "to method" "by degrees," and established to himself, "in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me." Johnson thus struggles, practically unaided but by "practice" and "observation."[198]

Here Johnson figures himself as one of those "heroes of literature" in *Rambler* 137, whose "proper ambition" is "to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge by discovering

[197] Preface, paras. 3, 2.
[198] Preface, paras. 4, 5.

and conquering new regions of the intellectual world" and who "ventures into the unexplored abysses of truth, and attempts to find his way through the fluctuations of uncertainty, and the conflicts of contradiction" (*Rambler* 137, IV, 362); or as one of those wishing "to be counted among the benefactors of posterity," who adds "by his own toil to the acquisitions of his ancestors, … looking out upon the wastes of the intellectual world, and extending the power of learning over regions yet undisciplined and barbarous" (*Rambler* 154, V, 58).

Throughout the Preface, Johnson reminds readers of the immensity of his task and his diligent endeavours to perform it. Thus Johnson has to find information "by fortuitous and unguided excursions into books," to "glean" information "as industry should find, or chance should offer it, in the boundless chaos of a living speech." Johnson's description of his labor, in which he faces "perplexity to be disentangled" and the "boundless chaos of a living speech," and in which he takes the "materials of the dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to a method,"is reminiscent of language Johnson uses to describe Herman Boerhaave's celebrated public lectures on chemistry:

> This he undertook . . . to the great improvement of the art itself, which had been hitherto treated only in a confused irregular manner, and was little more than a history of particular experiments, not reduced to certain principles, nor connected with another; this vast chaos he reduced to order, and made clear and easy, which was before to the last degree perplexed and obscure.[199]

Johnson's labours are not mere drudgery but intellectually serious endeavors. He reminds us that "to interpret a language by itself is very difficult"; that by a certain "class of verbs" his "labour has . . . been much increased," and that "it is hard to trace them

[199] Preface, paras. 28, 5; Samuel Johnson, "Life of Dr. Herman Boerhaave," *Samuel Johnson*. Oxford Authors. Ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 61.

through the maze of variation, to catch them on the brink of utter inanity, to circumscribe them by any limitations." If Johnson has failed in detailing the "whole power of these verbs," "it must be remembered, that while our language is yet living, and variable by the caprice of every one that speaks it, these words are hourly shifting their relations, and can no more be ascertained in a dictionary, than a grove, in the agitation of a storm, can be accurately delineated from its picture in the water." Johnson's own limitations become personified so that "Discernment," not Johnson, "is wearied." "Distinction" itself is "puzzled, and perseverance hurries itself to an end, by crouding together what she cannot separate." If it seems that Johnson's "complaints of difficulty" regarding the "uncertainty of terms, and commixture of ideas" be "thought only the jargon of a man willing to magnify his labours, and procure veneration to his studies by involution and obscurity," it "must be remembered that I am speaking of that which words are insufficient to explain." Many "seeming faults are to be imputed to the nature of the undertaking, than the negligence of the performer." And Johnson notes that "[i]f our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed." Johnson's "first experiments" did not indicate that "what I had not of my own was easily to be obtained." "[O]ne enquiry only gave occasion to another, . . . book referred to book," "to search was not always to find, and to find was not always to be informed; and . . . thus to persue perfection, was, like the first inhabitants of Arcadia, to chace the sun, which, when they had reached the hill where he seemed to rest, was still beheld at the same distance from them." Johnson's syntactic chains, from searching to not finding, from finding to coming away uninformed, replicate the endless chase for the

horizon's end, and lay out each step of his efforts for the reader: his "experiments," his successive enquiries, his movement from book to book, and his searches, both those that were and were not productive. Johnson documents his labor, demonstrating the time and effort spent without producing tangible results, as if he were justifying to a customer the cost for "labor."[200]

By using the figure of the Arcadians, Johnson demonstrates the fact that he labored very hard on this book, but that he exercised judgment, too. Johnson, unlike the Arcadians, recognizes a futile task as such and ends the chase. Johnson is then valiant for his efforts, and wise for his wisdom in choosing when to stop. The figure suggests that his faults lay in a doomed but brave attempt to "persue perfection." Johnson, the realist who recognizes his limits and "then contracted my design," goes on to present himself as having to limit time spent on individual sections of the *Dictionary* so that he could complete the whole. In one gesture Johnson admits imperfections and dramatizes his labor as a magnificent feat:

> A large work is difficult because it is large, even though all its parts might singly be performed with facility; where there are many things to be done, each must be allowed its share of time and labour, in the proportion only which it bears to the whole, nor can it be expected, that the stones which form the dome of a temple should be squared and polished like the diamond of a ring.

In making a gesture of preemptive defense, Johnson rhetorically erects the "dome of a temple," and presumably leaves others to the task of squaring and polishing the stones

[200] Preface, paras. 43, 45, 50, 51, 55, 94, 72.

which form the dome. If Johnson's subsequent admirers compared his large folio *Dictionary* to a noble edifice or a monument, Johnson had given them the hint.[201]

Johnson does not, of course, praise himself directly, but his indirect yet grand self-presentation perhaps comes from a conviction that "to dig the quarry or to search the field, requires not much of any quality, beyond stubborn perseverance; and though genius must often lye inactive without this humble assistance, yet this can claim little praise because every man can afford it" (*Rambler* 83, IV, 75). Mr. Rambler suggests that to trumpet one's "labors" was not, in itself, enough except perhaps "To mean understandings" for whom "it is sufficient honour to be numbered amongst the lowest labourers of learning" (*Rambler* 83, IV, 76). This view reflects Johnson's complementary view that one "may be sometimes culpable for confining himself to business below his genius, and losing in petty speculations, those hours by which if he had spent them in nobler studies, he might have given new light to the intellectual world" (*Rambler* 83, IV, 74-5).

By illustrating and dramatizing exactly what he means when referring to his "labours" Johnson shows that, unlike his predecessors, who were deemed "generally men of more shoulders than head,"[202] he had performed countless acts of immense intellectual labor. These grand rhetorical depictions of his labor are the concrete manifestations of the labor Johnson mentions with a kind of anaphoric repetition throughout the Preface. Thus

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[201] Preface, paras. 73, 83. Allen Reddick claims that the commonplace "conception of the *Dictionary* as monumental architecture was introduced" in 1756 by Christopher Smart in the January 1756 *Universal Visitor*, where Smart praised it as "a work I look upon with equal pleasure and amazement, as I do upon St. Paul's cathedral." Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's* Dictionary, 177. Perhaps Smart just revised Johnson's metaphor.

[202] *The Scots Magazine* 17 (February 1755), 91.

Johnson reminds us that he has "laboured [the *Dictionary* with so much application," that he is presenting to his readers a work that is the "labour of years," that he has performed a "task, which *Scaliger* compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine." By demonstrating the difficult nature of his labors, Johnson preemptively defends himself against criticisms, demonstrates his virtues of diligence and application, and distinguishes himself from undue association with any of his less intellectually endowed predecessors.[203]

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Johnson not only palliates admitted faults with "complaints of difficulty" (Preface, para. 51), but he counterbalances his admissions of fault by praising himself just as often. Following the advice he gave writers throughout his periodical essays, Johnson took a middle path between temerity and diffidence, between arrogance and submission. By counterbalancing pride and humility in a document that that required such direct self-promotion, Johnson might be able to secure a fair hearing for his labor of years and avoid straying into folly by acknowledging what he considered to be likely flaws. Conversely, Johnson's admissions of flaws would not unduly open him up to captious criticism since those admissions would be rhetorically outweighed by indirect yet grand gestures of self-praise. Time and time again, Johnson follows an admission of fault with a claim of merit, and vice versa.

This continual, repeating pattern of confession and indirect self-praise overlays the more general structure of the Preface, which is loosely organized according to

[203] Preface, paras. 84, 92, 93.

methodological questions. “The work, whatever proofs of diligence and attention it may exhibit, is yet capable of many improvements.” After candidly admitting some areas capable of improvements, Johnson writes that “some faults will at last appear to be the effects of anxious diligence and persevering activity.” As well, the “nice and subtile ramifications of meaning were not easily avoided by a mind intent on accuracy, and convinced of the necessity of disentangling combinations, and separating similitudes.” If Johnson is oversubtle, it is because of the ebullience of his admirable qualities—his “diligence,” his “persevering activity,” his commitment to “accuracy,” his conviction that it is right to disentangle what has heretofore been left to chance. In another passage, Johnson laments “[t]he imperfect sense of some examples” that he “could not remedy,” thus showing that their imperfection remains in spite of effort, rather than because of negligence. Besides, Johnson hopes that the imperfect sense of some examples will be compensated for by “innumerable passages selected with propriety, and preserved with exactness.” “Care,” Johnson continues, will sometimes betray to [sic] the appearance of negligence.” Elsewhere, Johnson notes that “authorities will sometimes seem to have been accumulated without necessity or use. . . . But a work of this kind is not hastily to be charged with superfluities.” “[A] more accurate examiner” will notice that the extra quotations display “different shades of meaning,” whereas “to careless or unskilful perusers” they “appear only to repeat the same sense. . . . [E]very quotation contributes something to the stability or enlargement of the language.” When Johnson—figured in the universal third person as “he”—“is catching opportunities which seldom occur,” he “will suffer those to pass by unregarded, which he expects hourly to return; he that is

searching for rare and remote things, will neglect those that are obvious and familiar." "In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much is likewise performed." In one triplet, Johnson presents errors as excusable and momentary lapses from his usual state of vigilance and attention, with each clause ending with rhetorical emphasis on Johnson's virtues: "[S]udden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning."[204]

In addition to these more straightforward examples of rhetorical counterbalancing, Johnson repeatedly balances a humble self-presentation with indirect yet grand self-praise. In several rhetorically conspicuous, grand passages, the literal point is one of humility, but the rhetorical effect is self-praise. Johnson establishes this pattern in the Preface from the beginning, noting that "Every other authour may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted yet to very few" (Preface, para. 2). Johnson figures the lexicographer as a typically undervalued intellectual laborer, as one "whom mankind have considered, not as the pupil, but the slave of science, the pionier of literature, doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which Learning and Genius press forward to conquest and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge that facilitates their progress" (Preface, para. 2). Johnson, by implication, is merely a "pionier", in its less flattering 18th-century sense. Johnson defines a "pionier" in his 1773 folio as "One whose business is to level the road, throw up works, or sink mines in

[204] Preface, paras. 69, 74, 76, 65, 81, 94, 93.

military operations" (1773 *Dictionary*). The pioneer is merely "the slave of science," a "humble drudge," but one whose work has grand consequences: he "facilitates" the "progress" of "Learning and Genius."

Once Johnson implicitly figures himself as an unappreciated, undervalued "pionier of literature" who "can only escape reproach," he fills the "Preface" with reminders of just why he merits praise. And in trying to establish his own scholarly credibility, Johnson maneuvers between "arrogance and submission" (*Rambler* 1, III, 7). Acknowledging his debt to Junius and Skinner for "the *Teutonick* etymologies," Johnson humbly genuflects before "these, whom I ought not to mention but with the reverence due to instructors and benefactors," and after praising their respective merits, Johnson concludes the paragraph by asserting his own critical sagacity and his habit of counteracting praise and censure. Thus "*Skinner* is often ignorant, but never ridiculous; *Junius* is always full of knowledge; but his variety distracts his judgment, and his learning is very frequently disgraced by his absurdities." Johnson is aware that the

> votaries of the northern muses will not perhaps easily restrain their indignation, when they find the name of *Junius* thus degraded by a disadvantageous comparison; but whatever reverence is due to his diligence, or his attainments, it can be no criminal degree of censoriousness to charge that etymologist with want of judgment, who can seriously derive *dream* from *drama*, because *life is a drama, and a drama is a dream*; and who declares with a tone of defiance, that no man can fail to derive *moan* from μόνος, *monos*, *single* or *solitary*, who considers that grief naturally loves to be alone.[205]

[205] Preface, para. 24. Johnson's self-defense here ("no criminal degree of censoriousness") is reminiscent of Johnson's self-vindication against the potential charge of ingratitude when relinquishing any claim of obligation to Chesterfield: "I hope it is no very cinical asperity not to confess obligation where no benefit has been recieved, or to be unwilling that the Public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself." *Letters*, I, 96.

After noting the ignorance of Skinner and the absurdities of Junius, Johnson places himself in the company of Aristotle and Cicero, while in the process of reminding us that he is a mere "pionier of literature." Johnson admits, "Some words there are which I cannot explain, because I do not understand them; these might have been omitted very often with little inconvenience, but I would not so far indulge my vanity as to decline this confession." After underscoring here his aversion to vain self-indulgence, Johnson elaborates by placing himself in grand company: "For when *Tully* owns himself ignorant whether *lessus*, in the twelve tables, means a *funeral song* or *mourning garment*; and *Aristotle* doubts whether ουρευς in the Iliad, signifies a *mule*, or *muleteer*, I may freely, without shame, leave some obscurities to happier industry, of future information."[206]

Later, Johnson follows a pathos-laden sketch of his exigencies and faults with indirect yet grand self-praise. "[M]uch of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to *Bacon*, to *Hooker*, to *Milton*, and to *Boyle* (Preface, para. 92). Johnson couches his desire to add celebrity to others in a sentence whose cumulative effect provides grounds for his own celebrity. Johnson may have suspected that few would think such labors, performing such tasks, were "useless or

[206] Preface, para. 47. In a letter (8 March 1758) apologizing to Charles Burney for delays in Johnson's Shakespeare edition, to which Burney had subscribed, Johnson notes, "I have printed many of the plays and have hitherto left very few passages unexplained; where I am quite at a loss, I confess my ignorance, which is seldom done by commentators." *Letters*, I, 159. The Greek word ουρευς is marked above the first upsilon to indicate accent and breathing in the original text.

ignoble"—and here Johnson, known for periodic sentences, employs a loose sentence to underscore the point. Johnson follows the litotes of the rather understated main clause, "I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble," with the bold hopes of a compound conditional clause, juxtaposing humility with indirect self-praise, if one reads Johnson's conditional clauses as implicitly foregone conclusions. Johnson's moments of self-praise, stated more directly and without their accompanying moments of humility, would be excessively prideful. Perhaps they still are, but when stated alongside and following candid admissions of fault and professions of inadequacy, their net effect aims toward the mean. If Johnson is prideful, his pride is defensive, and the object of his pride is desired "assistance" to those who seek "knowledge," "truth," and "science." Moreover, Johnson's pride is rhetorically counteracted, and palliated by his several gestures of humility, inadequacy, and personal suffering. Johnson's defensive pride was, perhaps, required by the awkward rhetorical circumstances under which he wrote. In any case, "there is always room to deviate on either side of rectitude without rushing against apparent absurdity" (*Rambler* 129, IV, 322).

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Not only does Johnson use self-counteraction as a virtuous and pragmatic principle of rhetorical arrangement; he also makes it a crucial aspect of his ethos in the Preface, where he dramatizes his own moral strength of will, emphasizing both his self-restraint and perseverance. Johnson lends moral resonance to his intellectual labors, which he portrays as an attempt to tread the middle path of virtue between presumption and idle despondency. In doing so, Johnson draws on the values and virtues developed in

his periodical essays, and he does so in ways that are consistent with classical and Christian concepts of virtue. Johnson's self portrayal as a man whose material, intellectual, and ultimately moral struggles for self-control has a classical analogue, in Aristotelian ethical terms, but it is not the *sophron*, the self-controlled man who always guides his actions by the dictates of reason; it is, rather, the *enkrates*, the morally strong man in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* who controls his passions, but not without struggle.[207] Martin Ostwald, who translates *sophron* and *enkrates*, respectively, as "self-controlled" and "morally strong," writes that these terms "refer not only to different virtues but to essentially different types of personality." The *sophron* "gives the impression of 'self-control' without effort or strain. The *enkrates*, on the other hand, has an intense and passionate nature which he is, indeed, strong enough to control, but not without a struggle. His 'moral strength' resides in his victory; the *sophron*'s 'self-control' makes a struggle unnecessary" While there is no direct evidence that Johnson consciously used the concept of the *enkrates* in shaping his self-presentation in the Preface, he would have been familiar enough both with Aristotle's ethical framework and his terms for virtue to be able to do so. He once considered producing a translation, "with notes," of "Aristotle's *Ethicks*," and both the term *enkrates* and *enkrateia* are used in New Testament lists of virtues for "restraint of one's emotions, impulses, or desires, *self-control.*"[208]

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[207] For the differences between the *sophron* and the *enkrates* I am indebted to Martin Ostwald's discussions of them in his edition of Aristotle's *Ethics*, 178 n. 12, 313-14.

[208] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., revised, Frederick William Danker, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) lists forms of *enkrateia* in Galatians 5:23, Acts 24:25, and 2 Peter 1:6; and a form of *enkrates* in Titus 1:8. The King James Bible translates forms of *enkrateia* as "temperance," and *enkrates* as "temperate," whereas these terms are

In addition, Johnson's essays suggest that he was familiar enough with the term *sophron* to use it twice as the name for models of undesirable or generally unrealistic self-regulation: a fictional correspondent to Mr. Rambler in *Rambler* 57, and a character sketched nearly nine years later in *Idler* 57. Writing to Mr. Rambler on frugality, Johnson's fictional Sophron imagines that his own ease in following simple maxims is universally replicable. He is "sometimes inclined to imagine, that, casual calamities excepted, there might, by universal prudence, be procured an universal exemption from want" (*Rambler* 57, III, 307). The *sophron* described in the *Idler* as "[o]ne of the most prudent of all that have fallen within my observation" is equally perplexed by ills of the world." He "has passed through the world in quiet, by perpetual adherence to a few plain maxims, and wonders how contention and distress can so often happen" (*Idler* 57, II, 178). Rather than being a laudable model, the *sophron* comes across as a man whose prudence has helped him avoid calamity, but whose aversion to risk of any kind has rendered him a rather timid, colorless creature. "Thus Sophron creeps along, neither loved nor hated, neither favoured nor opposed; he has never attempted to grow rich for fear of growing poor, and he has raised no friends for fear of making enemies" (*Idler* 57, II, 180). Prudence, for the *Idler*, "rather prevents loss than procures advantages; and often escapes miscarriages, but seldom reaches either power or honour. It quenches that ardour of enterprize, by which every thing is done that can claim praise or admiration"; it "keeps life safe, but does not often make it happy" (*Idler* 57, II, 177-8).

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translated, respectively, as "self-control" and "self-controlled" in the New Revised Standard Version. See also Aristotle, *Ethics*, trans. Ostwald, 178 n. 12. For Johnson's proposed translation of the *Ethics*, see *Life*, IV, 381 n. 1.

The *enkrates* is subject to strong passions in a way that the *sophron* is not. Thus it is more realistic, and hence more useful, as a moral model. For Aristotle, a "morally strong man (*enkrates*) is the kind of person who does nothing contrary to the dictates of reason under the influence of bodily pleasures, and the same is true of a self-controlled man (*sophron*). But while a morally strong man has base appetites, a self-controlled man does not and is, moreover, a person who finds no pleasure in anything that violates the dictates of reason. A morally strong man, on the other hand, does find pleasure in such things, but is not driven by them."[209] Yet Aristotle presents these types with an awareness that "in relation to the characteristics possessed by most people, moral weakness (*akrasia*) and moral strength (*enkrateia*) lie at the extremes."[210] Johnson, as he presents himself in the Preface, is a kind of modified or revised *enkrates* figure who resists not "base appetites" but noble, intellectual appetites.

Johnson self-consciously portrays himself as regulating his desires and hopes, with various results—thereby checking his own vanity or making his work more useful. Johnson has, for example, been "cautious lest my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and croud my book with words no longer understood" (Preface, para. 62). Johnson enumerates his grand desires, dramatizes his labors, and indicates his aversion to the intellectually dull aspects of his labor, which are vexatious, to which he is "condemned":

> When I first collected these authorities, I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science; from historians remarkable facts; from

[209] *Ethics*, trans. Ostwald, VII. 9, 200-01; 1151b-1152a.
[210] *Ethics*, trans. Ostwald, VII. 10, 202, 1152a.

> chymists complete processes; from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful descriptions. Such is design, while it is yet at a distance from execution. When the time called upon me to range this accumulation of elegance and wisdom into an alphabetical series, I soon discovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or useful in *English* literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words, in which scarcely any meaning is retained; thus to the weariness of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of expunging. Some passages I have yet spared, which may relieve the labour of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the dusty desarts of barren philology. (Preface, para. 57)

In a rational act of self-regulation, Johnson contracts his design to make it more useful, and even when he is engaged in the dull duties of a lexicographer the judgment of the "poet" intersperses his work "with verdure and flowers." Johnson is a man of reason and practical judgment, and he presents himself as bringing the taste of a poet to the intellectually mundane aspects of lexicography.

Here and throughout the text, Johnson portrays himself as regulating his own perhaps absurdly high expectations by employing, as he had recommended throughout the *Ramblers*, reason to check his own passions. Johnson recounts the hopeful resolutions he made upon starting the work:

> When I first engaged in this work, I resolved to leave neither words nor things unexamined, and pleased myself with a prospect of the hours which I should revel away in feasts of literature, the obscure recesses of northern learning, which I should enter and ransack, the treasures with which I expected every search into those neglected mines to reward my labour, and the triumph with which I should display my acquisitions to mankind. When I had thus enquired into the original of words, I resolved to show likewise my attention to things; to pierce deep into every science, to enquire the nature of every substance of which I inserted the name, to limit every idea by a definition strictly logical, and exhibit every production of art or nature in an accurate description, that my book might be in place of all other dictionaries whether apellative or technical. But these were the dreams of a poet doomed at last to wake a lexicographer. (Preface, para. 72)

Johnson's grandly described resolutions seem perhaps absurdly grand, and after describing with careful amplification the exuberance of his noble designs, Johnson uses one clean sentence to dramatize the end of his dreams and the beginning of his practical attention to completing his duty. Johnson defends the limitations of his work as the necessary result of a wise act. This message is reinforced as the passage continues into the juxtaposition of Johnson's endless labors with the "first inhabitants of Arcadia" who chased the sun. So while Johnson rhetorically enlarges the scale of his labors with this juxtaposition, he also uses the figure to demonstrate his own lack of folly. Johnson recognizes the folly of pursuing perfection—"I then contracted my design". Johnson both demonstrates his rational recognition of his limits and provides another proleptic defense against criticisms. Johnson recognizes his own limits, and hopes that the audience will agree that it is wiser to "set limits to my work, which would in time be ended though not completed," rather than to "persue perfection" (Preface, paras. 72-3). Contracting his design becomes a moral virtue that ends the task even as it opens it up to the imperfections of an incomplete work. Here Johnson demonstrates the practical wisdom urged by Mr. Rambler, who observes, "The known shortness of life, as it ought to moderate our passions, may likewise, with equal propriety, contract our designs" (*Rambler* 17, III, 96).

In Johnson's most famous account of self-restraint, he is a man who "flattered himself for a while" with the notion that his *Dictionary* might be able to "fix our language," but who now begins "to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time

one after another, from century to century, we laught at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who . . . shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation."[211]

Johnson's self-restraint is a model of self-regulation—he does not simply fail to meet his design, but curbs his noble desires with reasonable self-regulation, even when that reasonable self-regulation involves merely an acknowledgment of his own limits of knowledge to avoid vanity. Hence the "vigilance and activity" of academies intending to "guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders" has "hitherto been vain." Johnson recognizes, perhaps implicitly by contrast, that "sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength." Johnson, by implicit contrast, has curbed his pride and measured his desires by his strength.[212]

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If Johnson has restrained presumptuous hopes, he has also resisted discouragements, not only the intellectual challenges inherent to his task but the moral challenges concomitant to that task, including the vitiating effects of despondency. Johnson displays the ways he has, "with so much application" (Preface, para. 84), through "persevering activity" (Preface, para. 74), through "anxious" and "useful

[211] Preface, para. 84.
[212] Preface, paras. 84, 85.

diligence" (Preface, paras. 74, 93), managed to ensure that "[d]espondency has never so far prevailed as to depress me to negligence" (Preface, para. 74). Johnson's phrasing suggests that he has experienced despondency, though it has not prevailed. Johnson's rhetorical gesture of triumph over despondency suggests his own struggles to overcome a morally hazardous state of mind. Thus Johnson's dramatization of the material and intellectual hazards posed by a "work of such multiplicity" (Preface, para. 93) accompany reference to Johnson's perhaps numerous minor victories over despondency, which is comparable to the Christian and western moral philosophical concept of *acedia*, and which Johnson defines in the *Dictionary* as "Despair; hopelesness; desperation." "To DESPOND [In Theology.]" is defined as "To lose hope of the divine mercy," and for Johnson, "despair is criminal."[213]

Throughout Johnson's periodical essays he advises writers, including himself, against the danger of falling prey to despondency, which is both a hazard to one's social usefulness and one's mental and moral health. In *Rambler* 25, the Rambler notes that he has "often had occasion to consider the contrary effects of presumption and despondency," which he refers to as "opposite qualities of mind, which may become dangerous" (*Rambler* 25, III, 137) In *Rambler* 29, Mr. Rambler warns against despondency, which he distinguishes from general observations on the vicissitudes of life:

> The concern about things to come, that is so justly censured, is not the result of those general reflections on the variableness of fortune, the uncertainty of life, and the universal insecurity of all human acquisitions, which must always be suggested by the view of the world; but such a *desponding anticipation of*

[213] Preface, paras. 84, 74, 93. Yale *Works*, I, 225.

> *misfortune*, as fixes the mind upon scenes of gloom and melancholy, and makes fear predominate in every imagination [emphasis added]. (*Rambler* 29, III, 160).

Those among whom "despondence" is "some danger lest he that too scrupulously balances probabilities, and too perspicaciously foresees obstacles, should remain always in a state of inaction, without venturing upon attempts on which he may perhaps spend his labour without advantage" (*Rambler* 43, III, 236). "It is the fate of industry to be equally endangered by miscarriage and success, by confidence and despondency" (*Rambler* 127, IV, 313). In *Adventurer* 81 Johnson counsels against "torpid despondency," calling it "the frost of the soul which binds up all its powers, and congeals life in perpetual sterility" (*Adventurer* 81, II, 401). Despondency makes one socially and intellectually inert, not to mention spiritually lost; Johnson's battle against it, then, is framed as a moral victory.

Just as Johnson dramatizes his intellectual efforts by making explicit for the reader the intellectual depth of his labors, so he makes explicit the many impediments to the virtue of "persevering activity" (Preface, para. 74). After explaining why his "[c]are will sometimes betray to the appearance of negligence" (Preface, para. 81), Johnson makes his own lapses a general reminder of the limits of "the mind", a reminder whose length and detail suggest that it is not just a disquisition on "the mind", but a frank acknowledgement of Johnson's own challenges as he wavered between overconfidence and diffidence, as he overcame ignorance, confidence, fear, pride, sloth, security, anxiety, idleness, distraction, and dissipation.

> [I]n things difficult there is danger from *ignorance*, and in things easy from *confidence*; the mind, *afraid of greatness, and disdainful of littleness*, hastily withdraws herself from *painful searches*, and passes with scornful rapidity over

> *tasks not adequate to her powers*, sometimes *too secure* for caution, and again *too anxious* for vigorous effort; sometimes *idle* in a plain path, and sometimes *distracted* in labyrinths, and *dissipated* by different intentions [emphasis added]. (Preface, para. 82).

In this meditation on the dangers inherent in "things difficult" Johnson suggests that merely completing the *Dictionary* required a series of moral struggles. The material and mental challenges of his labors become moral challenges—the kind of moral challenges Johnson describes in many of his periodical essays, where he often portrays the mind between the "equal follies" of "security and despair", between the contrary excesses of "presumption and arrogance" on one hand, and "weakness and cowardice" on the other (*Rambler* 43, III, 236). Johnson reiterates throughout the Preface the difficulty of his "fortuitous and unguided excursions" into the "boundless chaos of a living speech." Johnson reminds readers that he has persevered despite being "*distracted* in labyrinths" and engaged in several "painful searches"; that he has faced "perplexity to be disentangled," and in which "discernment is wearied, and distinction puzzled"; he has traced words "through the maze of variation, to catch them on the brink of inanity," only to find that often "perplexity cannot be disentangled." Johnson's moral perseverance, then, perhaps follows the model of the apostle Paul, whom Johnson quotes in the *Dictionary* entry for DESPAIR: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair."[214]

Johnson portrays himself in the Preface as overcoming what he describes in *Rambler* 103 as an undesirable "middle state" achieved by those entrapped by that "snare" so "dangerous to busy and excursive minds, . . . the cobwebs of petty

[214] Preface, pars. 4, 28, 82, 50, 45.

inquisitiveness," who are entangled "in trivial employments and minute studies" —a state "between the tediousness of total inactivity, and the fatigue of laborious efforts. . . . The necessity of doing something, and the fear of undertaking much, sinks the historian to a genealogist, the philosopher to a journalist of the weather, and the mathematician to a constructer of dials" (*Rambler* 103, IV, 187). Johnson's disquisition here on the challenges to "the mind" serves as a kind of confession couched in the generalized moral language of the third person. It also allows Johnson to demonstrate for his readers and for his maker, not just the material, but also the mental and moral, challenges he faced and overcame through application, diligence, and perseverance, even though much time "has been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me;" even though he much of "my life has been lost under the pressures of disease." While writers "sometimes faint with weariness under a task, which *Scaliger* compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine," Johnson worked "amid inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow." Johnson looks "with pleasure on my book, however defective, and delivers it to the world with the spirit of a man that has endeavoured well."[215]

Johnson's defense against charges of negligence in the Preface are not only proleptic defenses against captious criticism but accounts of his moral struggles for virtuous action. In prayers Johnson wrote while at work on the *Dictionary*, he asks for help in shunning "sloth and negligence" (Yale *Works*, I, 48); in another he asks for help in repenting "of my negligence, that I may obtain mercy from Thee, and pass the time which Thou shalt yet allow me, in diligent performance of thy commands" (Ibid., I, 49).

[215] Preface, paras. 94, 93.

Johnson's presentation in the Preface of his struggles shows him accounting for how he has employed his talents and his time over the previous several years. Johnson began work on the second volume of the *Dictionary* with a future accounting of his own actions in mind, with a sense of moral purpose and duty: "O God who hast hitherto supported me enable me to proceed in this labour & in the Whole task of my present state that when I shall render up at the last day an account of the talent committed to me I may receive pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ" (Yale *Works*, I, 50).

Johnson, however, is not a perfect model of self-regulation. Sometimes methodological requirements or noble desires win in the struggle for self-control. But even this exuberance is chosen, rather than an unconscious sign of "negligence." For instance, sometimes "the scheme of my work did not allow me to repress" instances of "grammatical exuberance." He departs from his resolution to include among his examples of usage "no testimony of living authors" when "some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory supplied me, from late books, with an example that was wanting, or when my heart, in the tenderness of friendship, solicited admission for a favourite name." So in including a modern example Johnson is not "misled by partiality" but "excited" by "uncommon excellence" into "veneration." He is simply meeting necessity, supplying "an example that was wanting," or obliging the solicitations of "my heart, in the tenderness of friendship." As well, Johnson "sometimes, though rarely, yielded to the temptation of exhibiting a genealogy of sentiments, by shewing how one authour copied the thoughts and diction of another." This practice, Johnson notes, entails "repetitions, which might justly be censured, did they not gratify

the mind, by affording a kind of intellectual history." So when Johnson fails to regulate himself, it is because of methodological restraints beyond his control, or countervailing virtues, which extenuate his rare excesses. Johnson takes pains throughout to demonstrate that his work is "not imperfect for want of care."[216]

If one set of opposites, pride and humility, helped Johnson present himself in the Preface in an appropriately dignified yet modest rhetorical manner, another set of opposites, presumption and despondency, provided him with the moral framework for the public self-evaluation of his own accomplishments and actions in preparing the *Dictionary*. Just as Johnson follows the advice in writing the Preface that he had given to writers in his periodicals essays, so Johnson's self-vindication before the public, and before his maker, in the Preface proceed along ethical lines established in the periodical essays. Johnson portrays his own attempts to regulate his actions by consulting reason, his attempts to achieve a mean between the impious excesses of presumption and despondency, which both involve losing sight of one's relation to the divine.

Having dramatized, through copious amplification, both the difficult nature of his solitary task and his careful application, which was animated by noble if vain desires, Johnson then moves from discussing his impediments, to his responses to those impediments. So if some faults are due to the nature of the task, others are due to the necessity of "contracting" one's "design." In the drama of pietas that unfolds in the Preface, Johnson now moves from his courageous, diligent, and solitary stand against

[216] Preface, paras. 20, 60, 67, 77.

immense nature in the name of honor to his experience-driven restraints on a perhaps foolish adventure.

Part of Johnson's heroism comes from his self-conscious representation of himself as overcoming despondency and obstacles, as recognizing the limits of human capacity without giving up, from restraining his zeal and his passion by reason and experience, by applying the gifts of reason to the maze of life, and by conquering his personal inclinations to make the project useful to his country, and a benefit to mankind. Thus Johnson proleptically defends himself against the charge of vanity by showing that he has endeavored, he has employed his faculties to the best of his abilities. He has been diligent, "the contrary to idleness" (*Dict*.; adj. 1), a word he illustrates in the *Dictionary* with the passage from *Proverbs* 22.29: "A man diligent in his business shall stand before kings" (*Dict*.; "DILIGENT" adj. 1). "Whoever steadily perseveres in the exertion of all his faculties, does what is great with respect to himself; and what will not be despised by Him, who has given to all created beings their different abilities: he faithfully performs the task of life, within whatever limits his labours may be confined, or how soon soever they may be forgotten" (*Adventurer* 128, II, 480).

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Johnson's conclusion to the Preface has always invited the attention of those who study the Preface, including Boswell, who thought it strange "that the conclusion of his Preface should be expressed in terms so desponding, when it is considered that the

authour was then only in his forty-sixth year."[217] Moreover, if Johnson was so at pains to ensure the success of his own work in the body of the Preface, his conclusion, in which he, writing in the "gloom of solitude," dismisses his *Dictionary* "with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise" (Preface, para. 94), seems either contradictory or disingenuous. Johnson's conclusion has been described as "exaggerated," duplicitous, and as evidence of his constitutional melancholy; or merely as a traditional continuation of the "lugubrious tradition of humanistic lexicography."[218] Yet Johnson's conclusion is entirely in keeping with his performance in the Preface of moral self-regulation through counteraction, and it proceeds just as the "masters of rhetorick direct," by ensuring that "the most forcible arguments be produced in the latter part of an oration" (*Rambler* 207, V, 313-14). If Johnson wrote the Preface before receiving his honorary M. A. from Oxford, and before Chesterfield's momentous puffs of the *Dictionary* in *The World*, he was writing as an Oxford dropout, the reception of whose tome could greatly influence the rest of his career.

Having spent most of the Preface preemptively defending his work, his resignation of his work's fate to the public shows him following a vigorous self-defense,

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[217] *Life*, I, 298.

[218] For Boswell's comment on Johnson's constitutional melancholy, see *Life*, I, 298. "Johnson surely exaggerated his 'gloom of solitude' and indifference to censure or praise," Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, 114; "[T]he happy assonance of 'frigid tranquillity' may suggest the sort of contrivance a man uses only when he is focusing more on the audience than on himself. . . .But we realize how justified we are to suspect duplicity when we remember a letter Johnson wrote . . . (Feb. 1, 1755) just as he was finishing the *Dictionary*. In the letter the attitude toward both praise and censure is remarkably unlike the 'frigid tranquillity' assumed officially at the end of the Preface," Paul Fussell, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing*, 215, emphasis in original; "It must undoubtedly seem strange, that the conclusion of his Preface should be expressed in terms so desponding. . . . But we must ascribe its gloom to that miserable dejection of spirits to which he was constitutionally subject, and which was aggravated by the death of his wife two years before," *Life*, 213; "Johnson's elegiac and traditional sentiments in the Preface connect him" to a "lugubrious tradition of humanistic lexicography," Robert DeMaria, Jr. and Gwin J. Kolb, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and Dictionary Johnson," *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 42.

as well as an account of personal hardships, with the kind of "philosophical mind" he had earlier recommended to the public in his "Life of Savage."[219] Thus the conclusion continues Johnson's display of his attempts to tread the kind of dignified, virtuous middle path he so often recommends to writers in the essays—between hope and fear, between presumption and despondency. Johnson is writing a book for the marketplace, but refuses to appear too crassly concerned with the reception of his work. Johnson's "frigid tranquillity" bespeaks a man who is not presenting himself with the warmth of self-interested passion, but who is struggling to control that passion. Johnson here applies the "lenitives of passion" as Mr. Rambler does when "lightly touched with the symptoms of the writer's malady," an "anticipation of happiness" (*Rambler* 2, III, 12). There Mr. Rambler endeavored "to fortify myself against the infection, not without some weak hope, that my preservatives may extend their virtue to others, whose employment exposes them to the same danger" (*Rambler* 2, III, 12). Johnson's memorable phrase, "frigid tranquillity," combined with his description of his condition in the "gloom of solitude," dramatizes his self-control in spite of strong, countervailing passions. Johnson is not only counteracting false hope, but preventing the numbing effects of fear and despondency. A closer look at Johnson's use of the terms of this striking phrase, both as defined in the *Dictionary*, and as used in his other writings, will help show that the semantic tension between the elements of this phrase, too, plays a crucial role in the Preface's grand drama of moral struggle and self-control that serves as the basis for Johnson's virtuous ethos.

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[219] Samuel Johnson, "Life of Savage," in *Lives*, II, 379.

W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. includes "frigid," and the related words “frigidity” and “frigorifick,” among what he terms Johnson’s “philosophic” or “scientific” words in the *Rambler*, that is, Johnson’s often “Latinate, abstract, and sesquipedalean diction” that suggest a “physico-philosophical core” of Johnson’s “moral and psychological discourse.”[220] Johnson outlines four senses of FRIGID in his *Dictionary*: “1. Cold; without warmth. In this sense it is seldom used but in science. 2. Without warmth of affection. 3. Impotent; without warmth of body. 4. Dull; without fire of fancy.” And Johnson describes “FRIGORIFICK, adj. Causing cold,” as “A word used in science.” Johnson warns, throughout his essays, against various mental states producing a “frigorifick” effect on mental and physical activity and, hence, both social efficacy and piety. To the author who wearies near the end of a production, Johnson argues, “Against the instillations of this frigid opiate, the heart should be surely secured by all the considerations which once concurred to kindle the ardour of enterprise” (*Rambler* 207, V, 313). Thus Johnson, or at least Mr. Rambler, warns against the “fatal influence of frigorifick wisdom,” whereby “timorous prudence” is “inculcated, till courage and enterprize are wholly repressed, and the mind congealed in perpetual inactivity” (*Rambler* 129, IV, 322). The essays also contain several warnings against “frigorifick” influences, which, like “indolence,” in which “curiosity may be . . . congealed” (*Rambler* 118, IV, 268). A “frigorifick torpor encroaches upon” the veins of the dying Nouradin in *Rambler* 120 (IV, 277), and Mr. Rambler notes that “we every day see the progress of life retarded by the *vis inertiae*, the mere repugnance to motion” that is found among “those

[220] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the* Rambler *and* Dictionary *of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), xii-xiii.

that suffer themselves to freeze in idleness" (*Rambler* 134, IV, 347). "It may indeed happen that knowledge and virtue remain too long congealed" by the "frigorifick power" of "diffidence," as "the principles of vegetation are sometimes obstructed by lingering frosts" (*Rambler* 159, V, 82). "Torpid despondency" is an "error" to be avoided—it is the "frost of the soul which binds up all its powers, and congeals life in perpetual sterility" (*Adventurer* 81, II, 401). Mr. Rambler recommends that when one who has "learned the art of regaling his mind with ...airy gratifications" finds the "frigid and narcotick infection beginning to seize him, should turn his whole attention against it, and check it at the first discovery by proper counteraction" (*Rambler* 89, IV, 107).

Johnson also contemplated in his essays how one might achieve tranquility, and often prayed for it in his recorded prayers. In *Rambler* 6 Mr. Rambler writes,

> [W]e may very properly enquire, . . . how far we can exempt ourselves from outward influences, and secure to our minds a state of tranquillity: For, though the boast of absolute independence is ridiculous and vain, yet a mean flexibility to every impulse, and a patient submission to the tyranny of casual troubles, is below the dignity of that mind, which, however depraved or weakened, boasts its derivation from a celestial original, and hopes for a union with infinite goodness, and unvariable felicity. (*Rambler* 6, III, 31)

In *Rambler* 41, readers are told, "If fear breaks in on one side, and alarms us with dangers and disappointments, we can call in hope on the other, to solace us with rewards, and escapes, and victories; so that we are seldom without means of palliating remote evils, and can generally sooth ourselves to tranquillity, whenever any troublesome presage happens to attack us" (*Rambler* 41, III, 224). In *Rambler* 47, Mr. Rambler examines various reputed paths to tranquility. Some suggest that we "keep our minds always suspended in such indifference, that we may change the objects about us without

emotion. An exact compliance with this rule might, perhaps, contribute to tranquillity, but surely it would never produce happiness" (*Rambler* 47, III, 256). Others "recommend rather to sooth it into tranquillity, by making it acquainted with miseries more dreadful and afflictive" (*Rambler* 47, III, 257). In giving advice against "inordinate desires," Johnson writes as the *Adventurer* that an "ardent wish, whatever be its object, will always be able to interrupt tranquillity" (*Adventurer* 119, II, 465). "[T]o sooth the mind to tranquillity by hope, even when that hope is likely to deceive us, may be sometimes useful; but to lull our faculties in a lethargy, is poor and despicable" (*Adventurer* 69, II, 394). In *Rambler* 184, Johnson writes, "In this state of universal uncertainty, where a thousand dangers hover about us, . . . nothing can afford any rational tranquillity, but the conviction that, however we amuse ourselves with unideal sounds, nothing in reality is governed by chance" (*Rambler* 184, V, 205).

In his recorded prayers Johnson often seeks divine aid for "tranquillity of thought." He prays for help in discharging the "duties of my calling with tranquillity and constancy." He asks God to "permit me when the last year of my life shall come, to leave the world in holiness and tranquility." On his birthday in 1769, Johnson hopes to "survey my life with tranquility." Two birthdays later he hopes that his remaining days "may pass in reasonable confidence, and holy tranquility." He asks God to "preserve me from the dangers of sinful presumption. Give me, if it be best for me, stability of purposes, and tranquillity of mind."[221]

[221] Yale *Works*, I, 83, 107, 121, 122, 144, 161.

Johnson's definition of *tranquillity* ("Quiet; peace of mind; peace of condition; freedom from perturbation") suggests that tranquillity was a significant topos of Johnson's moral reflections, even when he uses other language. Johnson asks for help in calming his "inquietude"; prays for God to "restore ease to my body, and quiet to my thoughts." On Easter Day, 1771, Johnson writes, "O God, invigorate my understanding, compose my perturbations, recal my wanderings, and calm my thoughts." Johnson prays that God will "appease the tumults of my Mind." Likewise, Johnson's Easter prayer of 1775 asks for relief from "the infirmities of my body, and the perturbations of my mind." The following Easter he writes that "in part of my life [I] have been almost compelled by morbid melancholy and disturbance of mind." In asking God to "look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours," Johnson asks to be afforded "calmness of mind, and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come."[222] Johnson's pursuit of tranquillity is not only part of his own quest for mental and spiritual repose, but necessary to help him achieve his own sense of Christian duty. That pursuit of tranquillity, or "freedom from perturbation," was also part of the discourse of classical moral philosophy. Cicero, in his *De Officiis*, recommends that "we must keep ourselves free from every disturbing emotion (*animi perturbatione*), not only from desire and fear, but also from excessive pain and pleasure, and from anger, so that we may enjoy that calm of soul (*tranquillitas animi*) and freedom from care which bring both moral stability and dignity of character."[223]

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[222] Yale *Works*, I, 120, 124, 140, 161-2, 227, 257, 260-1.

[223] "Vacandum autem omni est animi perturbatione, cum cupiditate et metu, tum etiam aegritudine et voluptate nimia et iracundia, ut tranquillitas animi et securitas adsit, quae affert cum constantiam, tum

Against this background of Johnson's use of the terms, we can read Johnson's "frigid tranquillity" as a phrase that dramatizes his attempts to achieve a golden mean, as does the phrase "defensive pride." Johnson's dismissal of his work with "frigid tranquility" is a final display of moral struggle that exhibits Johnson's efforts to shake off despondency. Johnson the *enkrates* closes the Preface in a state of philosophical calm, however tenuous. The phrase performs, in the tension between modifier and modified, the moral struggle that Johnson so closely connects with his intellectual struggles. If Johnson's tranquillity here is, as his *Dictionary* definition suggests, a kind of "peace of condition" into which he has soothed himself, the modifier he chooses qualifies that tranquility, helping to distinguish his self-satisfaction from vanity. But if that tranquility is a "freedom from perturbation," its frigidity not only suggests that Johnson is counteracting the warmth of self-interested passion, but that his tranquility is the result of Johnson's resisting of the "fatal influence of frigorifick wisdom," which, if unchecked, leaves the mind "congealed in perpetual inactivity" (*Rambler* 129, IV, 322).

It is arguable that Johnson chose the noun "tranquillity" to palliate his gloom as he prepared for the publication of a work so consequential to his literary reputation and legacy. Johnson's "gloom of solitude" in the Preface is in keeping with the tone of a letter Johnson wrote to Thomas Warton, who was working to secure Johnson's honorary M. A. from Oxford. The letter is postmarked weeks after the second of Chesterfield's public puffs of the *Dictionary*, which as Sledd and Kolb have pointed out, "placed [Johnson] in an intolerably false position," since he "was soon to declare in a Preface perhaps already

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etiam dignitatem." Cicero, *De Officiis*, I. XX. 69. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. Walter Miller (London: William Heinemann, 1938), 70-71.

composed, that his great work had been written without the 'patronage of the great.'"[224] Johnson still was unsure about the status of his potential M. A. "I have mentioned it to none of my friends for fear of being laughed at for my disappointment." And reflecting, just days before Christmas, upon his wife's death over two years earlier, Johnson wrote, "I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any certain direction, or fixed point of view. A gloomy gazer on a World to which I have little relation. Yet I would endeavour by the help of you and your brother to supply the want of closer union by friendship."[225]

Whatever the state of Johnson's mind when he wrote the Preface, its conclusion is consistent with Johnson's ethos of moral self-regulation, and projects the kind of *tranquilitas animi* and *dignitas* recommended by Cicero; and the tension in the phrase "frigid tranquillity" itself performs for the reader an act of moral self-regulation. In this phrase Johnson again displays not the strenuous efforts of the *agonistes* but the moral struggles of the *enkrates* and the temperament of a philosophical mind. Though "frigid," grammatically speaking, modifies "tranquillity," each word rhetorically counterbalances the other, and together the words portray Johnson's effort to calm the perturbations of his mind, to achieve a philosophical quietude amid professedly gloomy solitude. It is this balancing act that prevents Johnson's self-vindication from veering into pride or indecorous self-love, and his frigidity from becoming torpid despondency. Johnson's practice here and throughout the text of such rhetorical and moral counterbalancing helps

[224] Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 101.
[225] *Letters* (21 December 1754), I, 90.

translate a potentially vain and morally awkward self-panegyric, the Preface, into an exemplum of virtue and nobility.

The *Ramblers* suggest the ways Johnson might turn his personal labors into an exemplum, and in the Preface, as in the *Ramblers*, "Johnson becomes a representative of mankind (rather than a flawless norm) whose individual struggle can easily be generalized, whose personal identity is transmuted into parable," as Richard B. Schwartz has put it.[226] Johnson thus takes awkward rhetorical circumstances, the practical need to defend his work and avoid the charge of transparently vain self-interest. Johnson takes the awkward need to serve as his own panegyrist and makes the best of it, making a virtue of a necessity. In his "Life of Savage" Johnson wrote that "It were doubtless to be wished. . . that men would secure themselves from being disappointed in their endeavours after happiness, by placing it only in virtue, which is always to be obtained."[227] In the Preface, Johnson reposes his happiness in his attempts to maintain a virtuous path. Johnson humbly resigns himself to the power and judgment of Providence, as he had recommended throughout the *Ramblers*. Taken together, Johnson's heroic depictions of his encounters with his own convey the picture of a man whose reason and experience lead him to pious humility, but not before he has tested the limits of his abilities and industry.

Johnson's "performance" in the Preface, to use the 18th-century term, is a self-vindication for his contemporaries and posterity, and at the same time, it is a kind of text-act, an act of *pietas* in which Johnson justifies his ways to God. While Johnson's

[226] Richard B. Schwartz, "Johnson's 'Mr. Rambler' and the Periodical Tradition," *Genre* 7 (1974): 203.
[227] *Lives*, II, 379-80.

continual gestures of self-defense and self-praise make it clear that he did care about the reception of his work, he makes his struggle to maintain a virtuous path, rather than any particular accomplishments, the ultimate criterion for judging his work on the *Dictionary*. Thus in the Preface Johnson models what he described in *Rambler* 146 as the "utmost excellence at which humanity can arrive"—a "constant and determinate pursuit of virtue, without regard to present dangers or advantage; a continual reference of every action to the divine will; an habitual appeal to everlasting justice; and an unvaried elevation of the intellectual eye to the reward which perseverance only can obtain" (*Rambler* 185, V, 209). Johnson, like others engaged in "the labours of learning" may be "disappointed in [his] labours," yet "their example contributed to inspire emulation, and their miscarriages taught others the way to success" (*Rambler* 180, V, 183-84). Crafting his ethos in awkward rhetorical circumstances, Johnson models virtuous intellectual labor in the Preface just as he models ethical ratiocination in the *Ramblers*. And though Johnson's encomiums to himself in the Preface, and his preoccupation with literary fame in the *Ramblers* suggest his wish that the *Dictionary* would be well received, he had written in *Rambler* 49 that fame is

> to be accepted as the only recompence which mortals can bestow on virtue; to be accepted with complacence, but not sought with eagerness. Simply to be remembered is no advantage; it is a privilege which satire as well as panegyric can confer. . . . The true satisfaction which is to be drawn from the consciousness that we shall share the attention of future times, must arise from the hope, that, with our name, our virtues will be propagated; and that those whom we cannot benefit in our lives, may receive instruction from our examples, and incitement from our renown (*Rambler* 49, III, 267-68).

Johnson closes his Preface by declaring "success and miscarriage" to be "empty sounds," and himself "having little to fear or hope from censure or praise" (Preface, para.

94), but only after he has eloquently defended his work. Johnson thus closes an at least pragmatically motivated and functioning paratext with a *contemptus mundi* gesture. Johnson's Preface performs a double duty; it presents a spirited, proleptic self-defense, and it serves itself as an act of virtue—of pride tempered by humility, of self-control sometimes relaxed for laudable reasons, and it contains a philosophical disregard for, or lack of dependance on, the views of others for happiness.

Johnson's dismissal of praise and censure also is in keeping with advice he had given in the essays. As Mr. Rambler, Johnson frequently advised against having too much concern with praise or censure, despite their powerful influence. In *Rambler* 193, Mr. Rambler observes the powerful influence of the desire for praise, writing that it "is so pleasing to the mind of man, that it is the original motive of almost all our actions. . . . [N]one, however mean, ever sinks below the hope of being distinguished by his fellow-beings, and very few have, by magnanimity or piety, been so raised above it, as to act wholly without regard to censure or opinion" (*Rambler* 193, V, 244). Yet Mr. Rambler, in various ways, seems eager to convince his readers, and perhaps himself, that "[a]pplause and admiration are by no means to be counted among the necessaries of life" (*Rambler* 20, III, 114). In *Rambler* 23, Mr. Rambler notes "one of the first precepts of moral prudence"—that "every man should regulate his actions by his own conscience, without any regard to the opinions of the rest of the world. . . .[I]f we make the praise or blame of others the rule of our conduct, we shall be distracted by a boundless variety of irreconcileable judgments, be held in perpetual suspense between contrary impulses, and consult forever without determination" (*Rambler* 23, III, 126). Mr. Rambler concludes

Rambler 106 by noting, "he that extends his hope to higher rewards" will not "be so much anxious to obtain praise, as to discharge the duty which Providence assigns him" (*Rambler* 106, IV, 204). In order that "we may not languish in our endeavours after excellence, it is necessary that . . . 'we raise our eyes to higher prospects, and contemplate our future and eternal state, without giving up our hearts to the praise of crouds, or fixing our hopes on such rewards as human power can bestow'" (*Rambler* 118, IV, 269). Likewise, in *Rambler* 127:

> He that never extends his view beyond the praises or rewards of men, will be dejected by neglect and envy, or infatuated by honours and applause. But the consideration that life is only deposited in his hands to be employed in obedience to a Master who will regard his endeavours, not his success, would have preserved him from trivial elations and discouragements, and enabled him to proceed with constancy and chearfulness, neither enervated by commendation, nor intimidated by censure" (*Rambler* 127, IV, 315).

Mr. Rambler writes in *Rambler* 196 that experience teaches one that "what he does, whether good or bad, soon gives way to new objects of regard. He then easily sets himself free from the anxieties of reputation, and considers praise or censure as a transient breath, which, while he hears it, is passing away, without any lasting mischief or advantage" (*Rambler* 196, V, 261). In *Rambler* 203, Mr. Rambler writes, "Whether to be remembered in remote times be worthy of a wise man's wish, has not yet been satisfactorily decided, and indeed, to be long remembered, can happen to so small a number, that the bulk of mankind has very little interest in the question" (*Rambler* 203, V, 295). And in the final *Rambler*, Johnson concluded that the "essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the

licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment" (*Rambler* 208, V, 320). Johnson's persistent preoccupation in the *Ramblers* with the desire for, and elusiveness of, literary fame suggests rather unsurprisingly that he did hope for a good reception, but at the end of the Preface, Johnson dramatizes his struggle to maintain the kind of "philosophical mind" that he modeled in the *Ramblers*, and that he described in his "Life of Savage"—a mind with which one might "alleviate the loss or want of fortune or reputation, or any other disadvantage which it is not in man's power to bestow upon himself"—a frame of mind "very properly proposed to the imitation of multitudes who. . . languish under afflictions which might be easily removed."[228] Having dramatized his intellectual labors as moral struggles, Johnson displays to the public "the spirit of a man that has endeavoured well" (Preface, para. 93), and is willing to disregard the opinion of the public in favor of "a Master who will regard his endeavours, not his success" (*Rambler* 127, IV, 315).

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Boswell praised Johnson's *Dictionary* as a work "of much greater mental labour than mere Lexicons," a view Johnson helped create as much with his performance in the Preface as he did in the body of his large work.[229] In the process of developing lines of defense for himself, Johnson developed arguments that would help dignify the work of detailed intellectual labor, even when it was generally misunderstood by the wider public. Johnson, in perhaps unwitting attempts at self-defense in the essays, defended and

[228] *Lives*, II, 379.
[229] *Life*, I, 293.

encouraged scholarly endeavour, industry, and perseverance, and he discourages undue censure on those whose activities have been ridiculed popularly via longstanding stereotypes of the virtuoso and the pedant. As he later does in his Preface to Shakespeare ("Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor."), Johnson in the *Dictionary* Preface characterizes his labor as a duty and not dull.[230] For Johnson, it is the frigid man—lost in the maze of indolence, and whose inactivity renders him socially useless and a careless steward of divine gifts—who serves as the most consistent object of disapproval rather than the dull man, whose zeal for trifles consumes him. Johnson romanticizes intellectual labor and his essays, in contradistinction to Locke's *Essay* and Bacon's *Novum Organum*, does not lay out a rigorous epistemology or outline a method for scientific discovery, but among other things, explores at the level of human passions and appetites, impediments to the advancement of learning—the personal challenges facing one who attempts to carry out the New Science "advancement of learning" program. The essays offer a personal and social Christian ethic of virtuous endeavor, which Johnson then tries to model in the Preface. In the process of preemptively defending his own labors Johnson developed a new ethos to replace the dull scholar and virtuoso.

For Johnson, the drudgery of labor was a necessary complement to a comprehensive view. Such labor would provide data often disregarded by "those arrogant philosophers who are too easily disgusted with the slow methods of obtaining true

[230] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare, 1765," in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, vols. VII-VIII of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), VII, 95.

notions by frequent experiments; and who, possessed with too high an opinion of their own abilities, rather choose to consult their own imaginations, than inquire into nature, and are better pleased with the delightful amusement of forming hypotheses, than the toilsome drudgery of amassing observations."[231] Johnson condones a system of intellectual labor in which there is an appropriate and valued place for systematizers and for drudges, and in which critical discussions were engaged in a tone not of malevolence, but of moderation. "[S]omething may be properly attempted by criticism, keeping the middle way between presumption and timidity."[232] For Johnson, all have their place in the 'general system of life.' Johnson rewrites the poring antiquarian as a man whose faults are his own and whose potential benefits are all of ours. Johnson's rewriting is a palimpsest, not an erasure, of the previous type. Johnson's satire of these virtuosos is not failed, but a conscious part of Johnson's ethic in the essays.

IV. The Rhetoric of the Preface and Johnson's Views on Language

One consequence of this study is that it confirms what others have claimed: Johnson's practice in the *Dictionary* at times belies his pronouncements in the Preface. Even further, and more importantly, it suggests that we should not read Johnson's Preface to the *Dictionary* for evidence of Johnson's linguistic views without comparing his comments in the Preface to his actual practices in the *Dictionary* and recognizing the rhetorical nature of the Preface as a document of public self-fashioning written at a crucial moment in Johnson's career. Johnson's dramatic portrayal of his own labors is

[231] Samuel Johnson, "Life of Dr. Herman Boerhaave," *Samuel Johnson*. Oxford Authors. Ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 62.
[232] "Preface to Shakespeare (1765)," in Yale *Works*, VII, 106.

partly made possible by his dramatic portrait of language as an evanescent and imposing force of nature whose "causes of change" are "perhaps as much superiour to human resistance, as the revolutions of the sky, or the intumescence of the tide." Johnson portrays language in the Preface as a "boundless chaos of a living speech" where "words are hourly shifting their relations"; "fugitive cant . . . is always in a state of increase or decay"; "sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints"; "time and chance," "mutability,"and "a natural tendency to degeneration" have "hitherto been suffered to" change the language "without opposition." It should not be forgotten that the depiction of language we get in the Preface is in the context of a vigorous self-defense, offered to the "republic of letters" in a self-promotional paratext. In Johnson's drama of virtuous moral struggle, his efforts are more likely to be lauded, his shortcomings more likely to be forgiven, and his labor more likely to be appreciated, by an audience who understands the difficulties of fixing the language.[233]

In this preemptive self-defense against carping critics, Johnson serves as his own advocate, and by portraying language as an intractable force of nature he engages in what Rome's most famous advocate calls *remotio criminis*, a "removal of the charge" or shifting of blame from himself whereby the advocate diverts the accusation or responsibility for an act to another person or thing.[234] Johnson's dramatic depiction of language is part of his self-defense against critics eager to charge him with failing at his task. By depicting language variety as a "maze of variation" through which he had to

[233] Preface, paras. 86, 28, 45, 80, 85, 84, 91.
[234] Cicero, *De Inventione*, II, XIX, 87. Loeb edition, trans. H. M. Hubbell (London: William Heinemann, 1949), 253.

travel even to "the brink of utter inanity"as he tried to "trace" meaning, Johnson makes it more difficult to blame him for not conquering one of the "insurmountable distresses of humanity" (para. 91), or fault him for failing to "change sublunary nature" and thereby "embalm his language," securing it "from corruption and decay" (para. 84). Such dramatic language draws attention in almost any discussion of the Preface or the *Dictionary*, but this hyperbolically charged language gets its charge in part from Johnson's self-defensive posture, and is part of his rhetorical strategy of self-fashioning.

Even Johnson's famous rallying cry, "we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language," along with other signs that his project is zealously nationalistic, can be read as a crucial element in his strategy of self-defense. Johnson's exhortation comes on the heels of his complaint that "the license of translatours, . . . if it be suffered to proceed will reduce us to babble a dialect of *France*," and precedes his dedication of the *Dictionary* to "the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology, without a contest, to the nations of the continent." Taken together, these passages display most nakedly the kind of anxious nationalistic ambition that helped underwrite, along with a coterie of booksellers, Johnson's undertaking. It is just such passages that urge readers to conflate Johnson's views on language with his presumed views on politics.[235]

Yet these passages, too, derive part of their strident tone from Johnson's defensive posture. The complaint against the "licence of translatours" concludes Johnson's fifth of five paragraphs on the "causes of change" in language. The "licence of translatours,"

[235] Preface, paras. 91, 90, 92.

whose translations are figured as the "great pest of speech," is only one of many things with which "speech" (and thus, by extension Johnson) has to contend. As Johnson ratchets up the patriotism, it is easy to forget the fact that he is, at the very same time, moving from a section describing obstacles to his mission (i.e., the many causes of "alteration" in language) to a passage in which he effectively absolves himself from the responsibility for fixing the language. After describing all of the reasons he could not fulfill his charge, he moves from what he could not do to what others should do, and to what "we" (not just I) *should* do. Johnson hopes that "the spirit of *English* liberty will hinder or destroy" an "academy for the cultivation of our stile," should it be established. At the same time, however, he abdicates responsibility for doing anything to stop the "great pest of speech," exhorting his readers to "let them" (the members of the hypothetical academy) "endeavour, with all their influence, to stop the license of translatours." This exhortation not only serves as a kind of challenge—"let them" with "all their influence" try to succeed where I have failed, where the "vigilance and activity" of previous academies "have been in vain" (para. 85). But it also serves as a kind of release from responsibility: "let them," not me, stop the abuses of translators. Johnson's personal failure to fix the language here becomes the success of "the spirit of *English* liberty," and becomes the fault of, among many other things, the "licence," "idleness," and "ignorance" of translators (para. 90). In closing a section on causes of change about which he could do little, Johnson emerges as the champion of "*English* liberty" in contrast to translators who corrupt the spirit of the language.

Having expressed his hope that "the spirit of *English* liberty" would "hinder or destroy" an English-language academy, Johnson takes one step further toward absolving himself from the responsibility of fixing the language, this time not urging "them" (an English academy) to take up the responsibility, but rather transferring the responsibility to his English readers (para. 90). At this point, he effectively ends his term of service to the country. The text, so suffused with the first person singular, so replete with reminders of what "I" have done for "the honour of my country," shifts to what "we" should do. In this rare moment of rhetorical solidarity of purpose with his readers, Johnson implicitly converts his presumed responsibility for preserving and protecting the language from a matter of personal to collective responsibility: "[W]e have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language" (para. 91). The patriotic fervor of this passage, taken along side his Francophobic language and his devotion to the "honour of my country"—the very language that helped establish the *Dictionary* as an icon of Englishness—now comes across, in the most unsympathetic analysis, as crude, John Bull jingoism, and urges readers to conflate Johnson's views on language with his presumed views on politics.

Yet Johnson's high-flown exhortation here, again, shifts the responsibility from him to "us": "let *us* make some struggles for our language" (it is not simply my responsibility, nor, given the circumstances of language change I have outlined, could anyone expect to burden one individual with such a responsibility). The causes of language change, described abundantly with rhetorical *copia*, are likened to "other insurmountable distresses of humanity," and require the kind of collective action, and

collective sense of responsibility, needed to maintain "tongues," "governments," or any other entity supposedly constituted for the common good. As Johnson rallies the crowd with patriotism, every cheering patriot, wittingly or not, accepts responsibility for the state of the language, consenting by acclamation to relieve Johnson of the "duty of the lexicographer" (para. 6). At this point, Johnson's official term of service and duty ends with acknowledgment of his limitations and obstacles, but the thunder of patriotic applause obscures this fact.

By pointing out the reasons for Johnson's high-flown rhetoric, I do not suggest that his patriotism or his depictions of language are somehow disingenuous or that they seriously distort his attitudes toward, or views on, language. But Johnson's patriotism in the Preface is generally taken to *reflect* his work in the *Dictionary* rather than to *represent* it. This tendency makes sense; Johnson wrote the Preface; who would know better the contents of the *Dictionary* or the goals of the lexicographer? Yet our understanding of Johnson's approach to language study or his 'theories' on language is strongly shaped by the rhetorically charged Preface, which is consulted more frequently than the *Dictionary* itself, and generally with little notice of the possibility that his depiction of language, of his aims or goals, might function as an element of the striking self-fashioning that pervades the Preface.

The many causes of linguistic change, the intractability and exuberance of the language, the lexicographer's service to the country, Johnson's "labor of years" in a "task, which *Scaliger* compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine" (paras. 92, 93)—all of these elements of the Preface contribute to the brilliance and the high drama

of what amounts to a scholar's highly consequential public oration before the republic of letters and posterity. Donald Siebert's study of "low, bad" words in the *Dictionary* and Thomas Gilmore's study of how Johnson treats Gallicisms indicate that Johnson's prescriptive rhetoric is misleading, given evidence from the *Dictionary*.[236] Gwin and Ruth Kolb have shown that Johnson was, by contrast, remarkably accurate in describing his tendencies when truncating quotations for inclusion as illustrative quotations.[237] On matters pertaining more directly to the presumed "duty of the lexicographer," however, Johnson seems to employ more attention to presenting his lexicographic choices in a favorable light. This chapter study offers the first argument attempting to outline the various reasons why the rhetoric of the Preface might differ from Johnson's actual practices in the *Dictionary*. More empirically based studies of the *Dictionary*'s contents, and more awareness of the Preface's rhetorical nature will help balance out the understandable yet inordinate weight given to the Preface when considering Johnson's views on language.

[236] Donald T. Siebert, "*Bubbled*, *Bamboozled*, and *Bit*: "Low Bad" Words in Johnson's *Dictionary*," *SEL* 26 (1986): 485-96; Thomas B. Gilmore, Jr., "Johnson's Attitudes toward French Influence on the English Language," *Modern Philology* 78 (1981): 243-60.
[237] Gwin J. and Ruth A. Kolb, "The Selection and Use of the Illustrative Quotations in Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary*," in *New Aspects of Lexicography*, ed. Howard D. Weinbrot, 61-72.

Chapter 2, Recovering the "Rigour of Interpretative Lexicography": or, How to Read Johnson's *Dictionary*

I. Introduction

> Mr. Elphinston talked of a new book that was much admired, and asked Dr. Johnson if he had read it. JOHNSON. 'I have looked into it.' 'What, (said Elphinston,) have you not read it through?' Johnson, offended at being thus pressed, and so obliged to own his cursory mode of reading, answered tartly, 'No, Sir, do you read books *through*?' —Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.[238]

Even those of us who read books through can only say that we have looked into Johnson's *Dictionary*, if we can even say that. Johnson's *Dictionary*, next to no one reads a dictionary through. Robert Browning, according to an early account, "qualified" himself for a literary profession by "reading and digesting the whole of Johnson's Dictionary."[239] Eighteenth-century Scottish historian William Robertson, according to Johnson's friend John Hawkins, told Johnson that "he had fairly perused his *Dictionary* twice over."[240] But more often than not, the *Dictionary* is known by means of its preface rather than the text itself. This is not only because of the wide availability of the Preface and our limited access to the *Dictionary*; it also stems from the nature of the text. Yet we certainly perform readings of the *Dictionary*, though necessarily on the basis of quite limited evidence. Three scholars who have studied the *Dictionary* as closely as anyone—Allen Reddick, Anne McDermott, and Robert DeMaria, Jr.—handle the hermeneutical challenge of interpreting the *Dictionary* in different ways, but they all insist on treating the *Dictionary* as a "literary text." DeMaria's *Dictionary* is a New-Critical kind of unified text with moral "themes;" McDermott, writing with Marcus Walsh, posits an atomistic

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[238] *Life*, II, 226.
[239] Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), I, 75.
[240] Sir John Hawkins, Knt. *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* ed. Bertram H. Davis (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 142.

view of the text in which entries are "discrete elements with no cohesive ties between them."[241] Allen Reddick acknowledges that the discontinuous nature of a dictionary places constraints on one's ability to sustain any polemic by means of disconnected quotations across hundreds of pages, but he remains committed to reading the *Dictionary* as rhetorical or literary discourse, suggesting that Johnson "could, however, develop a persistent rhetoric" at the level of the entry.[242] The main drawback to analyzing the *Dictionary* as a literary text in these ways, however, is that doing so obscures the qualities that make it distinctive *as* a dictionary. If DeMaria and Reddick, by finding themes or a unified polemic in the *Dictionary*, go too far in the direction of finding unities, McDermott and Walsh go too far in the other direction by isolating entries that are by necessity and by Johnson's design often interconnected.

If we view the *Dictionary* as a text of linguistic inquiry, rather than a literary one, we need not posit an organically unified *Dictionary* nor consider entries as isolated islands of text. In fact, the *Dictionary* can be read as a richly interconnected hypertext, with many entries in the *Dictionary* being related by loose networks of explicit and implicit cross-references. In teasing out these connections among entries, we pursue paths that Johnson invites readers to follow. Johnson's own comments in the *Plan* and Preface on how to read his own work suggest that he built such connections into the *Dictionary*,

[241] Robert DeMaria, Jr., "Johnson's *Dictionary*," *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 85-101; Anne McDermott and Marcus Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*: Some Editorial and Textual Considerations," in *The Theory and Practice of Text-Editing: Essays in Honour of James T. Boulton*, Ian Small and Marcus Walsh, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 49. DeMaria, Jr. explains the rationale for, and approach to, reading themes in the *Dictionary* in his "Preface" to *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

[242] Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's* Dictionary *1746-1773* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 164. See also Allen Reddick, "Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* and its Texts: Quotation, Context, Anti-Thematics," *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 66-76.

expecting readers to use them to make judgments of their own about meaning and usage where he could not be conclusive. In addition to noting these links among entries, we should perform parallel readings of Johnson's comments on words (e.g., "a corruption," "retained in Scotland"). Thus Johnson's controversial comments on Scots words, for instance, should be read against one another in order determine their nature and intent, which is in dispute. Such parallel readings, unlike hypertextual readings, are only possible after careful scholarly research, but the existence of a searchable CD-ROM version of the *Dictionary* facilitates such research. These readings, taken together, reveal the logic of Johnson's philological reasoning. When we read across the entries as I suggest, we begin to see how Johnson uses data from one entry to inform his judgments in another. Thus we find Johnson teasing out patterns that are not so much morally didactic or polemical, as one might expect from Reddick or DeMaria's accounts of the *Dictionary*, but philological or even proto-linguistic, having to do with textual analysis, sound change, and patterns of word-formation and derivation.

If these connections across the body of the *Dictionary* illuminate the logic of Johnson's philology, so do the connections among elements *within* individual entries. A summary of the standard assessment of Johnson's *Dictionary* might say that the usage notes are prescriptive and capricious, the definitions are brilliant if at times absurdly Latinate, and the etymologies are often, to use Macaulay's term, "wretched." Many assessors of Johnson's achievements in the *Dictionary* have compartmentalized the various elements of his entries in this way to assess them. For Boswell, the "etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not, I think, entitled to the first praise

amongst the various parts of this immense work. The definitions," by contrast, "have always appeared to me such astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language, as indicate a genius of the highest rank."[243] John Walker, late eighteenth-century elocutionist (orthoepist) and lexicographer, also compartmentalizes Johnson's entries in the Preface to his own dictionary, writing,

> This great man troubled himself little about pronunciation, he seems to have cared little for etymologies; and even grammatical disquisitions seem not to have been his favourite study; but when words were to be precisely defined, when the boundaries of their significations were to be fixed, and their most delicate shades of meaning to be distinguished and exemplified; this task, so difficult to the strongest mind, seemed to present him with an operation worthy of his powers: in this Labour he was, indeed, a literary Hercules.[244]

It certainly makes sense to see Johnson's writing of definitions, etymologies, and usage notes as discrete acts—they do represent different activities and skills. But by compartmentalizing elements of the *Dictionary* in this way, scholars confine themselves by borders Johnson routinely ignores. As a result, they facilitate significant misreadings of the *Dictionary* and obscure the particular character of Johnson's philology in the *Dictionary*.

If we are to understand Johnson's philology on his own terms, these components of entries in the *Dictionary* can more fruitfully be viewed as complementary interpretive activities, elements of what I call Johnson's lexicographic-hermeneutic triangle: etymology, meaning, and usage. To clarify the connections among elements of the entry, and thereby understand the character and logic of Johnson's philology in the *Dictionary*, I propose that we remap its entries, viewing them as consisting of *textual* and *metatextual*

[243] *Life*, I, 292-93.
[244] In Allen, "Samuel Johnson and the Authoritarian Principle," 382.

elements. The *text* consists of the default elements of the entry (head word, part of speech, definition), and the *metatext* consists of Johnson's editorial comments on words, moments in the *Dictionary* where Johnson exerts his voice by commenting on the *text*. By doing so, we can see the extent to which an interplay exists for Johnson among these various components of an entry—these closely linked interpretive activities—in Johnson's *Dictionary*. This kind of interplay is part of what makes Johnson's *Dictionary* distinctive and what characterizes the nature of his philology. Since Johnson drew most of his illustrative quotations from authors who wrote in the "golden age" of English literature, between Sidney and Dryden, his skill as an explicator of Shakespearean English was crucial to his defining practices. And when interpreting Shakespeare's English, Johnson employed his knowledge (or the knowledge of his six amanuenses, five of whom were Scottish) of Germanic cognates, country dialects, and contemporary spoken Scots to do the interpretive work crucial to his analysis.[245]

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The tradition of compartmentalizing Johnson's entries, along with competing perspectives on Johnson's aims in the *Dictionary*, enables quite contrary readings of both his usage notes and the nature of his lexicography. James G. Basker, adducing such notes as the one for *auld* ("A word now obsolete; but still used in the Scotch dialect."), has suggested that "one of several 'low' or 'improper' categories of words" Johnson "systematically attempted to proscribe was Scotticisms. Frequently, he seems to have included a Scottish word or usage in his *Dictionary* not because he thought it valid but

[245] For a brief description of the amanuenses, see *Life*, I, 187.

simply to single it out and stigmatise it as a Scotticism."[246] But in an earlier article, Donald T. Siebert argues that Johnson "did not often practice in the *Dictionary* what he preached in the preface regarding familiar diction," that he was quite willing to include examples of familiar diction in the *Dictionary*, that the "very presence of these words in the Dictionary, whether labeled or unlabeled, . . . confirm[s] that Johnson had no intention of expunging these words from the language."[247] From this standpoint, "for Johnson to recognize Scotticisms at all is a surprising testimony to his lexicographic open-mindedness."[248] Basker applies his sense of Johnson's aims to the evidence, and Siebert infers Johnson's aims from a reading of Johnson's practices, but if Johnson's inclusion of Scotticisms is to be viewed as testimony of any kind, it should be done with an awareness of the role of this entry component vis-à-vis other elements of the entry, and in relation to Johnson's recurring practices in the *Dictionary*, which illuminate our readings of his practices at any particular point in the text.

How might recontextualizing Johnson's editorial comments alter our readings of his aims and actions as a lexicographer? One of Basker's examples shows, for instance, how he includes the noun *drotchel* among the list of Scotticisms he regards as stigmatized by Johnson, and lists the entry thus:

> *Drotchel*. n.s. . . . An idle wretch, a sluggard. In Scottish it is still used.[249]

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[246] James G. Basker. "Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 15 (1991): 82.
[247] Donald T. Siebert, "*Bubbled, Bamboozled,* and *Bit* "Low Bad" Words in Johnson's *Dictionary*," in *SEL* 26 (1986): 487, 489. In the category of "familiar diction" Siebert means to "include those words and expressions variously classified as cant, slang, vulgar, as well as the language of current fashion, the language Swift had decried as 'modern Terms of Art,'" 487.
[248] Siebert, "*Bubbled, Bamboozled,* and Bit," 496, n. 14.
[249] Basker, "Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity," 82.

In the context of Basker's discussion of Scotticisms, it seems reasonable for Basker not to distract the reader with an etymology that is perhaps inaccurate, and seemingly irrelevant to his point; but by removing the etymology Basker removes a context that significantly alters our reading of the comment on Scottish usage. When we view the entry as it appears in the *Dictionary*, Johnson's comment on Scottish usage takes on a very different character:

> DRO'TCHEL.*n.s.* [corrupted perhaps from *dretchel*. *To dretch*, in *Chaucer*, is to *idle*, to *delay*. *Droch*, in Frisick, is *delay*.] An idle wench; a sluggard. In Scottish it is still used.[250]

As it stands, this entry, unauthorized by any illustrative quotation, could demonstrate Siebert's claim that Johnson was quite willing, notwithstanding his comments in the Preface, to include in the *Dictionary* examples of familiar diction. Yet it could also be included because it exercised Johnson's philological and linguistic curiosity. Having noted the property of idleness or sluggishness, Johnson conjectures an unattested earlier form of the word, *dretchel*, and relates it to what appear to be semantically related words from Middle English and from Frisian, a language he expressed interest in, years later, to Boswell.[251] Here the comment on "Scottish" usage can actually be read as the only real evidence Johnson provides for the word's existence, assuming it is not an unacknowledged borrowing from previous English dictionaries.[252] Moreover, Johnson's

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[250] Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent quotes from the *Dictionary* come from the 1773 fourth edition folio, the edition Johnson revised himself. Mere additions to the text, when they occur in the fourth edition, will be distinguished by being underlined; other alterations to the text will be noted when they occur.

[251] Writing to Boswell, then living in Utrecht, Johnson wrote, "It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language." *Life*, I, 475.

[252] In the Preface, Johnson suggests that unattested words he includes are either "useful," or known to him "to be proper." Words "which I considered as useful, or know to be proper, though I could not at present

philological curiosity, as seen in this entry editorial comments, may have been sparked by his conjecture in an earlier entry:

> DREDGE.n.s. [*To dretch*, in *Chaucer*, is to delay; perhaps a net so often stopped may be called from this.] A kind of net.
>
> > For oysters they have a peculiar *dredge*; a thick, strong net, fastened to three spills of iron, and drawn at the boat's stern, gathering whatsoever it meeteth lying in the bottom. *Carew*.[253]

This entry includes the same word from Chaucer, and the etymology includes Johnson's speculation about how this word has changed in sound, spelling, and meaning. His conjecture is based on a presumed sound correspondence between "dge" and "tch," and Johnson's link of the semantic notion of delay or impeded progression that he finds in both *dretch* and *dredge*.[254] When we view Johnson's comments on words, placed in context with the rest of the entry and alongside related entries, we get a fuller sense of what Johnson is doing in the *Dictionary* than we do from the standpoint of Siebert or Basker on Johnson's Scotticisms.

While this chapter aims to influence our reading of the *Dictionary*, it should be obvious that it is extremely rare for someone to *read* Johnson's *Dictionary* in the most accepted sense of the term. It is more realistic to say that we *perform readings* of the *Dictionary*, or any dictionary, on the basis of quite limited evidence. While generally judged and assessed as a coherent text, the *Dictionary*'s size and relative inaccessibility mean, practically speaking, that it is usually interpreted on the basis of the widely

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support them by authorities, I have suffered to stand upon my own attestation, claiming the same privilege with my predecessors of being sometimes credited without proof" (Preface, para. 41).

[253] Johnson has tightened the text of the quotation for the 1773 fourth edition.

[254] Modern linguists would, of course, convert conventional spellings (*tch* and *dge*) to phonetic symbols (č and ǰ) to indicate sound correspondences. In modern linguistic terms the sound correspondence here would be between the voiceless and voiced palatal affricates.

anthologized Preface or on a highly circumscribed set of data culled from the imposing two-volume folio. Readings of the *Dictionary* are usually done in piecemeal fashion. Those few who now consult it do so as with most dictionaries, for some practical purpose, and we usually only encounter very small portions of the whole at any given time. So most readings or interpretive understandings of the *Dictionary* rely on Johnson's Preface, which is as concerned with scholarly self-fashioning as it is with laying out methodology. Yet Johnson's *Dictionary*—long a symbol of power and authority, long seen as indicative of a widespread eighteenth-century approach to language, and one of the most significant philological projects of the eighteenth century—is an irresistible subject for grand arguments. It has been read as a historically useful reference work; as an index of 18th-century approaches to language study; as a work of cultural, classist, and linguistic hegemony; as a proud nationalistic achievement; as a thematically integral work of didactic or polemic intent; as the reflection of one man's intellectual development; as a redaction of the best accumulated practices up to his day; as a literary text; as a thematic encyclopedia; as the metaphor for a political project. Most treatments of the Dictionary argue from assumptions about Johnson's intentions and his practices, but it is important to ground these larger claims on the fullest view possible of Johnson's practices in the *Dictionary* lest our circumscribed views of the *Dictionary* encourage seriously infelicitous readings of Johnson's lexicography and philology.

This chapter, like all studies of the *Dictionary*, must rely on a limited sample of the entire text to make generalizations about the whole, but that sample has been chosen with an understanding that, as Allen Reddick has shown, Johnson's *Dictionary* is "a text

in flux, growing and changing, in response to its author's struggles with the language and with the rhetoric of the text itself, from the earliest days of its composition until" its revision in "1773 and beyond."[255] Specifically, I have collated Johnson's comments on usage in four letters (B, G, M, S) of the first edition (1755) and the fourth edition (1773), the only one revised by Johnson himself. I have also compared Johnson's comments on words even when they fall within the etymological brackets, since Johnson's etymological commentary and his usage notes often overlap in content and in location. These comments, taken together, as I argue they should be, constitute what I call Johnson's editorial comments. My sample represents various stages of the *Dictionary*'s preparation, and more than one quarter of the total pages in the *Dictionary*.

By reintegrating Johnson's editorial comments—his usage notes and his etymologies—with one another, and by showing how they, in turn, are often integral to Johnson's defining practices, we will view elements of Johnson's philology that are often decontextualized from one another, and see how they are often better understood when seen as working together. As a result, we gain a fuller understanding of the nature and character of Johnson's philology, insofar as it can be seen in the *Dictionary*. These comments are crucial to our understanding of the *Dictionary* because they are so conspicuous and have so strongly influenced modern assumptions about Johnson and his lexicography. These comments, thus recontextualized, contain some of the best evidence we have for understanding Johnson's philological mind at work. Like nothing else, they show Johnson grappling with the complexity of human language, and they give us a

[255] Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 8.

sense of what Johnson may have meant in the Preface by the "rigour" of his "interpretative lexicography."[256] The heroic drama of Johnson's strenuous lexicographic labors as portrayed in the Preface is enacted, though less dramatically, scene by scene in these entries. We will best understand Johnson's philology, as far as it can be perceived in the *Dictionary*, by following the tracks of the lexicographer through his "fortuitous and unguided excursions into books" and "the boundless chaos of a living speech."[257]

II. Johnson's Editorial Commentary in the Dictionary*: Literature Review*

Numerous close studies of Johnson's *Dictionary* have deepened our knowledge of its contents. Because of the *Dictionary*'s size and detailed nature, studies of its contents by necessity focus on particular elements of the dictionary entries, on Johnson's treatment of particular words, or on Johnson's treatment of particular authors. Sledd and Kolb outlined Johnson's extensive debts to his predecessors; Robert DeMaria, Jr. has produced the most comprehensive study of recurring sentiments and themes in Johnson's illustrative quotations; Allen Reddick's authoritative account of the *Dictionary*'s composition and revision devotes significant attention to Johnson's illustrative quotations and their significance; Daisuke Nagashima has produced the most detailed studies to date of Johnson's etymologies; Elizabeth Hedrick has shown how Johnson incorporated Locke's theories on language into his lexicographic principles and practices; Thomas B. Gilmore, Jr. has studied Johnson's treatment of gallicisms and of the poet James Thomson; Harold B. Allen has studied Johnson's usage notes; and Donald T. Siebert, Jr. has studied Johnson's "low bad" words. Yet despite these detailed studies, we only have

[256] Preface, para. 48.
[257] Preface, para. 28.

a partial view of one of Johnson's most conspicuous practices in the *Dictionary*, and one of the most striking contributors to his modern reputation as a lexicographer—his editorial comments on words.

In the most detailed treatment of Johnson's editorial comments to date, Harold B. Allen analyzes what he calls Johnson's "linguistic judgments" in the *Dictionary* (2), but Allen only includes in this category "the epithets and terms of approval and disapproval with which Johnson indicated his attitude toward words" (164). Because Allen is interested primarily in Johnson's "personal attitude toward language" (166) he excludes any commentary by Johnson that does not reflect this "personal attitude":

> Not all expressions of judgment about words by Johnson are significant . . . for the immediate purpose of particularizing his attitude toward language. These, accordingly, have been ignored in making this study. They fall principally into four classes: labels indicating technical words, labels or statements indicating obsolescence, guesses about the etymology, and neutral observations of usage. (Allen, 1164-65).

By confining Johnson's "linguistic judgments" (2) to his "attitude toward words" (164) Allen presents a partial, skewed view of Johnson's "linguistic" activity in the *Dictionary*. Johnson's comments on obsolescence and his "neutral observations of usage" are just as relevant to our understanding of his linguistic determinations as his more censorious comments. Allen's study not only presents a limited view of Johnson's handling of language in the *Dictionary*, but it also relies on dated assumptions about Johnson's "mental make-up" and "emotional disposition" (146, 147):

> [I]t is most important to realize, from the unanimous biographical evidence supplied by his contemporaries—notably by Boswell, [sic] how completely Johnson's mental make-up was that of the dictator. Regardless of subject-matter, his conversation and his writing was not so much a discussion as it was a series of pronouncements, often made with an arbitrariness that brooked no dissenting

> opinion. . . . There can be no doubt that Johnson's vigorous intellect was directed by his emotional disposition to the maintaining of what essentially were personal likes and dislikes, and to maintaining them with almost violent dogmatism at the slightest hint of opposition. And in Johnson's published criticism this assertive arbitrariness is consistently found with respect to language matters. . ." (146-47).

In Allen's presentation, Johnson's "linguistic judgments" in the *Dictionary* are the almost inevitable manifestations of his "assertive arbitrariness" or his "mental make-up" rather responses to language in context or judgments influenced by Johnson's self-imposed methodological restraints.

The other category of editorial commentary, Johnson's handling of etymology, has been studied closely by Daisuke Nagashima. Nagashima argues that Sledd and Kolb, in their classic study of the *Dictionary*, underestimate the extent to which those etymologies demonstrate independent judgment and careful consideration on Johnson's part.[258] Nagashima concludes that Johnson "was far from being a mere copyist or condenser; on the contrary he always exercised his own judgment whenever he was not fully convinced by the opinions advanced in his sources."[259] After considering Johnson's

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[258] Nagashima primarily considers Johnson's etymologies under entries for the letters A, B, C, W, Y, and Z (Johnson includes no entries for X except a description of the letter itself) in Chapter 4 of *Johnson the Philologist* (Osaka, Japan: Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1988). Here Nagashima is particularly concerned with how Johnson drew on, and departed from, sources for etymologies, with particular examinations of how Johnson used the work of Stephen Skinner, Francis Junius, Nathan Bailey, George Hickes, John Minsheu, and Gilles Ménage. An earlier, abridged version of a portion of this chapter may be found in "Johnson's Use of Skinner and Junius," in Prem Nath, ed. *Fresh Reflections on Samuel Johnson: Essays in Criticism* (Troy, New York: Whitston Publishing Company, 1987), 283-98. In "Johnson's Revisions of his Etymologies," *Yearbook of English Studies: Eighteenth-Century Lexis and Lexicography* Vol. 28 (1998): 94-105, Nagashima considers etymological revisions under A, L, W, Y, and Z. In contrast to Nagashima, Robert DeMaria, Jr. and Gwin J. Kolb claim that Johnson rarely reports the judgments of other etymologists, rarely offering his own etymological explanations. See "Johnson's *Dictionary* and Dictionary Johnson," *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 19-43, esp. pp. 26-31. Nagashima also studies the *Dictionary*'s rarely studied prefatory essays, "The History of the English Language" and "A Grammar of the English Tongue" in Chapters 2 and 3 of *Johnson the Philologist*.

[259] Nagashima, *Johnson the Philologist*, 201.

revisions of his etymologies, Nagashima concludes that in these revisions "it is possible to see various facets of Johnson's philological mind at work."[260]

Nagashima's findings make it clear that if we look to the etymologies for traces of Johnson's philological mind at work, we cannot restrict our searches to what is written between the etymological brackets, the "territory of etymology proper," to use Nagashima's phrase (101). In a study of Johnson's revision of his etymologies, Nagashima finds non-etymological comments within the etymological brackets, and etymological comments outside those brackets. Nagashima finds that between the etymological brackets Johnson often includes comments that are not etymological by modern standards. Johnson includes comments on word-formation (96), "grammatical peculiarities and irregularities" (100), as well as pronunciation and accentuation (101-02).[261] Nagashima tries to account for the variety of comments between the etymological brackets by noting that the eighteenth-century notion of etymology was broader than our own: "In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century linguistics, 'morphology' of today is usually called 'etymology'. . . . [I]n Johnson as well as in linguistics in general, etymology is closely associated with phonology, morphology, and even syntax" (100). Yet Nagashima also observes Johnson placing these sorts of comments outside the brackets (102). In the process of noting several instances of Johnson moving material in and out of these brackets, Nagashima finds that Johnson's practices are "sometimes

[260] Nagashima, "Johnson's Revisions of his Etymologies," 105.
[261] "Derivation" was sometimes called "etymology" in early grammars. See, for instance, Johnson's brief description of etymology in the *Dictionary*'s prefatory "GRAMMAR": Etymology teaches the deduction of one word from another, and the various modifications by which the sense of the same word is diversified; as *horse, horses;* I *love*, I *loved*." Some modern lexicographic practice conflates the two as well while some sources apply the term "derivation" in a more technical sense, as Merriam-Webster does, "the formation of a word from another word or base (as by the addition of a usually noninflectional affix)."

contradictory" (104) and reveal "inconsistency" (104-5); in one case, Nagashima concludes that "Johnson's idea of etymology. . . is too broad to be accepted by any standards of today" (102).

But if Johnson is inconsistent about what he does or does not include between the etymological brackets, it is not just because his idea of etymology is broader than our own, but for two other reasons. First, Johnson's modes of commentary, which include glossing, etymologizing, and usage notes, often overlap both in their content and in their placement within the structure of Johnson's entries. So in the entry for *banter*, we find a comment on usage located in the space typically reserved for etymology:

> To BA'NTER.v.a. [a barbarous word, without etymology, unless it be derived from *badiner*, Fr.] To play upon; to rally; to turn to ridicule; to ridicule. *L'Estrange*.; *L'Estrange*.; *Tate~~'s Juvenal~~*.[262]

Second, Johnson's idea of dictionary-entry structure is more flexible than our own. Our readings of the *Dictionary* will be confused if we anachronistically try to retrofit Johnson's entries with modern templates for dictionary-entry structure, templates which were in Johnson's time still in the process of becoming standardized. While certain ideas about how to arrange a monolingual dictionary entry had long been standardized by Johnson's time (place the headword first, followed by the part of speech, followed by the definition), Johnson exercised more flexibility of structure from entry to entry than is seen in modern dictionaries, which are standardized and regularized by teams of editors and strict editorial policy. In this chapter I identify the locations and categories of

[262] For brevity's sake, I here only list the authors whose quotations illustrate the definition, rather than including the text of the quotations. At a later point in this chapter, I will look at entire individual entries to discuss the ways in which these contexts matter to our readings of the *Dictionary*. Strikethroughs indicate material included in the 1755 1st edition but removed in the 1773 4th edition.

Johnson's editorial commentary and demonstrate how one might read them alongside one another for a more comprehensive view of Johnson's philology than has been seen. It is in these very comments, thus recontextualized, that we can find the nature of Johnson's lexicography and philology.

III. Text *and* Metatext*: The Structure of Entries in the* Dictionary *and the Locations of Johnson's Commentary*

Part of the reason we are inclined to compartmentalize Johnson's entries this way has to do with our own familiarity with the now loosely codified norms of lexicography. As literate adults, we come to a dictionary knowing how to use it. Because its structure and organization, both at the level of the entry and of the text at large have long been loosely fixed, a dictionary is easy to skim and use quickly. Once you learn how to use one dictionary, you have learned how to use any dictionary. A monolingual dictionary entry now contains certain generally predictable elements, and once those elements are assigned a typographic place within a given dictionary's entry, they appear in the same place, over and over. Allowing for small yet significant differences, monolingual dictionaries for the average user are organized alphabetically by word, and include the part of speech, pronunciation guides, definitions, the etymology, and a note on usage when relevant. These elements of the entry represent discrete activities and are visually distinguished from one another on the page. Etymologies, for instance, always appear in the same place within a particular dictionary's entries, and are often identified by appearing within brackets or being distinguished from usage notes somehow. Once their location within an entry is fixed they always occur there, and no other activity occurs

there. In fact, their predictable occurrence in the same spot allows readers to ignore them if their interests lie elsewhere.

But modern readers who approach Johnson's *Dictionary* expecting such regularity will not always find it, and this is a crucial point in understanding how to read Johnson's entries. Unlike modern lexicographers, whose large staffs, computers, and publication house editors can more readily ensure standardized entry formats, Johnson, who, as Allen Reddick has already shown, slightly revised and reconceived his methods as he worked on the *Dictionary*, did not always observe the rigid compartmentalization of entry space.[263] Influenced by unconscious habits and expectations as dictionary users, modern readers may expect that within the "etymological brackets" of an entry we will always and only find etymology. But Johnson intermittently places what might be deemed usage notes between the brackets as well, as in the entries for *benign*, *medicinal*, or *shabby*:

> BENI'GN n.s. [*benignus*, Lat. It is pronounced without the *g*, as if written *benine*; but the *g* is preserved in *benignity*.] . . .
>
> MEDICI'NAL adj. [*medicinalis*, Latin: this word is now commonly pronounced *medícinal*, with the accent on the second syllable; but more properly, and more agreeably to the best authorities, *medicínal*.] . . .
>
> SHA´BBY.adj. [A word that has crept into conversation and low writing; but ought not to be admitted into the language.] Mean; paltry. *Swift.*

[263] Anne McDermott notes that this fact complicated the process of applying SGML coding to entries in the CD-ROM version of the *Dictionary* for the purpose of making it searchable: "coherence in coding was not always possible to maintain where the presentation of information in the text is idiosyncratic and discursive." For instance, there are "notes on spelling, pronunciation, usage, and grammar, which are frequently embedded within an etymology or a definition, or even tacked on to the end of an entry." "Editor's Introduction," *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM: The First and Fourth Editions*, ed. Anne McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8. McDermott does not discuss this aspect of the *Dictionary* beyond its implications for SGML coding of the CD-ROM.

Johnson will also occasionally insert what amounts to a textual gloss on grammar within these brackets, as in the second signification for the adverb "minutely":

> MI'NUTELY.adv.
> 2.[In the following passage it seems rather to be an adjective, as *hourly* is both the adverb and adjective.][264] Happening every minute.
> Now *minutely* revolts upbraid his faith-breach,
> Those he commands, move only in command,
> Nothing in love. *Shakepeare's Macbeth*.

At times Johnson will use the bracketed area to indicate that the head-word is actually a variant of a more common form:

> BLO'NKET.n.s. [I suppose for *blanket*.]
> Our *blonket* livery's been all too sad
> For thilke same season, when all is yclad
> With pleasance. *Spenser~~'s Pastorals~~*.

> SHOUGH.n.s. [for *shock*.] A species of shaggy dog; a shock.
> In the catalogue ye be for men,
> As hound and greyhounds, mungrels, spaniels, curs,
> *Shoughs*, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are 'cleped
> All by the name of dogs. *Shakespeare's Macbeth*.

Johnson occasionally uses the space within the brackets to clarify usage with a point of grammar, such as the "reciprocal sense" of *to* mistake:

> To be MISTA'KEN. To err. [*To mistake* has a kind of reciprocal sense; *I mistake, je me trompe. I am mistaken*, means, *I misconceive, I am in an error*; more frequently than *I am ill understood*; but, *my opinion is mistaken*, means *my opinion is not rightly understood*.] *Sidney*; *Shakesp. Henry V*; *Waller.*

Johnson will also use brackets to enclose details about derivation (word-formation) and field labels, as under *belly-fretting*:

> BE'LLY-FRETTING.n.s. [from *belly* and *fret*.]
> 1. [With farriers.] The chafing of a horse's belly with the foregirt. . . .

[264] These brackets are added in 1773.

So while Johnson does seem to regard the space between the brackets as the default location of etymologies, he also uses the brackets as a space for demarcating commentary from the text of the definition proper.

The most significant other space Johnson reserves for commentary comes after the definition proper, usually following a period or colon (and often an em space), and less frequently at the end of the definition following a comma, and comments on usage are usually found here, as in the following entries.

> To SLU'BBER. v.a. 3. To cover coarsely or carelessly. This is now not in use, otherwise than as a low colloquial word. *Wotton*.
>
> To GLAVER <sic>.v.n. [*glave*, Welsh, flattery; *gliwan*, Saxon, to flatter. It is still retained in Scotland.] To flatter; to wheedle. A low word. *L'Est~~range's Fables~~.*
>
> To BAWL. v.n. [*balo*, Lat.] 1. To hoot; to cry with great vehemence, whether for joy or pain. A word always used in contempt. . . . .
>
> BE'RGMASTER.n.s. [from *berg*, Sax. and *master*.] The bailiff, or chief officer, among the Derbyshire miners.

But Johnson will also use this space following the definition as a space for the same categories of commentary found within brackets. One may find etymological and other kinds of commentary in this space, as in the definition for *box*, *to gospel*, and *spitchcock*:

> BOX. n.s. [box, Sax. buste, Germ.] 1. A case made of wood, or other matter, to hold any thing. It is distinguished from *chest*, as the *less* from the *greater*. It is supposed to have its name from the *box* wood.
>
> To GO´SPEL v.n. [from the noun.] To fill with sentiments of religion. This word in *Shakespeare*, in whom alone I have found it, is used, though so venerable in itself, with some degree of irony: I suppose from the gospellers, who had long been held in contempt. *Shakesp.*
>
> To SPI´TCHCOCK. v.a. To cut an eel in pieces and roast him. Of this word I find no good etymology. *King*.

At least one category of comment that we find after the definition proper that differs from the text that we would like to label "commentary" is the invented illustrative phrase or illustrative example Johnson occasionally uses to elucidate the definition.

> To GORGE.v.n. [*gorger*, French.] . . . 2. To swallow: as, *the fish has* gorged *the hook*.
>
> GOA'TISH.adj. [from *goat*.] Resembling a goat in any quality: as, rankness; lust. *Shakesp.King Lear*; *More against Atheism*.

In each case, Johnson uses the colon to exit the definition proper and enter a new kind of comment.

While we can usually find Johnson's commentary on words in one of these two places (between the brackets or immediately following the definition proper) sometimes an entire signification will sometimes be devoted to such commentary, as in the entry for the verb *to fadge*. Here the comments after the number 4 serve as a comment applicable to all significations listed for the headword, listed 1 through 3 and illustrated respectively by Shakespeare, Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, and Richard L'Estrange's *Fables*:

> To FADGE. v.n. . . . 4. This is a mean word not now used, unless perhaps in ludicrous and low compositions.

Similarly, for headwords listing only one signification the entire text of the signification may be constituted by editorial commentary, as in the entry for *beemol*:

> BE'EMOL.n.s. This word I have found only in the example, and know nothing of the etymology, unless it be a corruption of *bymodule*, from *by* and *modulus*, a note; that is, a note out of the regular order.
>
> > There be intervenient in the rise of eight, in tones, two *beemols*, or half notes; so as, if you divide the tones equally, the eight is but seven whole and equal notes. *Bacon*.

With the definition of *beemol* seemingly transparent in Bacon's quotation, Johnson's entry is made up entirely of his commentary.

In these areas where we will find Johnson's commentary, Johnson may combine categories of commentary in one comment, and he seems to reserve the right to use these spaces for any type of commentary:

> BI'ZANTINE. n.s. [more properly spelt *byzantine*; from *Byzantium*.] . . .
>
> To GLEEN v.n. To shine with heat or polish. I know not the original notion of this word: It may be of the same race with *glow* or with *gleam*. I have not remarked it in any other place. *Prior*

While these examples display variety in Johnson's placement of commentary, Johnson usually places commentary within the entry in such a way that it can be distinguished from the definition proper: within the brackets; after a period or colon or sometimes a comma, signifying the end of the definition proper; or within single significations (either constituting the entire text of the head-word's entry, as in *beemol* n.s., or constituting the final signification in a series, as in *to fadge* v.n.).

Just as there exists an overlap in these spaces for commentary within the space of a single entry, there exists an overlap in Johnson's own interpretive strategies between tracing derivation, accounting for semantic and phonological shifts, and explicating or glossing the works of writers whose texts were difficult to read. Any examination of Johnson's editorial commentary, whether it considers etymologies or usage notes, or another form, must be open to finding this commentary in any of these spaces rather than expecting etymologies, for instance, only to be found within the brackets.

* * * * * *

The overlap that occurs between Johnson's areas of commentary suggests that to get a comprehensive sense of Johnson's commentary, and to get a sense of how the different types of commentary interact with, complement, and influence one another, it would be fruitful to view Johnson's entries as consisting of *text* and *metatext*, with *text* corresponding to those elements of the *Dictionary* where Johnson's personal voice recedes or seems absent (head word, part of speech, definition, illustrative quotations), and with *metatext* corresponding to those places in the text where Johnson's voice is foregrounded or seems present, whether they occur within or without the brackets, whether they occur before or after the definition. These categories come from observing Johnson's text and the way Johnson exploits the structure of the dictionary entry rather than from preconceived ideas about how the entry should be structured or demarcated. They also recognize the frequent overlap, both in location and in content, among the varied types of commentary Johnson employs. A comment on etymology, for instance, can merge with a comment on usage. Using one name, *metatext*, for the varied types of commentary encourages modern readers of the *Dictionary* to consider how those kinds of commentary may be related or complement one another. Generally speaking, the metatextual elements of the *Dictionary* include comments on the status, usage, or history of a word, as well as comments on unusual features of grammar, spelling, or pronunciation. While the *text* refers to recurring elements of the default paradigmatic entry (head word, part of speech, definition), the *metatext* refers to elements of the entry that only occur when Johnson deems it necessary to comment on some element of the *text*. The *metatextual* elements generally depend for their existence upon elements of the

text, and occur if at least the minimal textual elements are present. As already described, the metatextual spaces, or spaces in which Johnson typically places commentary, occur in predictable locations.

The distinction between text and metatext, or between definition proper and commentary, reflects the common practice in dictionaries of using typographic elements of the text (punctuation, empty space, numbers, brackets, fonts) to distinguish and demarcate the various functions of the entry. Such conventions make the structure of entries more transparent and make dictionaries easier to scan, and thus more user-friendly. In Johnson's *Dictionary*, for instance, the head word is composed entirely of capital letters, and the part of speech is printed in italics. A minor revision to punctuation in the 1773 fourth edition serves to help distinguish between the definition proper and other elements of the entry, including the lexicographer's commentary. For instance, in the definition for the transitive verb *to bid*, senses 2 and 3 read as follows, minus quotations, in the first edition:

> 2. To command; to order; before things or persons.
> 3. To offer; to propose; as, to *bid* a price.

In the fourth edition they are revised to distinguish visually the definition from the rest of the line (which contains a collocation in sense 2; and an invented illustrative phrase in 3):

> 2. To command; to order: before things or persons.
> 3. To offer; to propose: as, to *bid* a price.

This type of correction, however minor, is found in a number of entries of the revised fourth edition (*bigotry* n.s.; *bloody* adj. 2; *body* n.s. 4; *boldface* n.s.; *bone* n.s. 4; *bottomed* adj. *bounce* n.s.; *bruteness* n.s.; *to bundle*, v.a.; *burnisher* n.s. 2, and elsewhere) and is a

minor example of how typographic features help declare function within the structure of a dictionary entry.

But even though the structure and typography within Johnson's entries demarcate the text and metatext, there is a closer relationship between text and metatext in Johnson's *Dictionary* than in other works which include significant quantities of metatext. This relationship between text and metatext in Johnson's *Dictionary* can better be seen when contrasted with those kinds of works, such as Johnson's copiously footnoted editions of Shakespeare, whose notes have often been compared to his work in the *Dictionary*. Dictionaries, like texts with footnotes, use typographic conventions to hierarchize text on the page, but they do so differently. In Johnson's edition of Shakespeare, the use of footnotes visually and functionally subordinates the commentary in relation to the text of the play. Even when a given page of the play might actually include more metatext than text, as often happens in Johnson's Shakespeare, that metatext is hierarchically subordinate to the text because it serves the text and its readers. Moreover, the visual subordination of the footnote on the page, or the relegation of the endnote to the back of the book, allows the metatext to be disregarded more easily by readers, whose text is only interrupted by whatever symbol is chosen to indicate a note. Besides, in cases where metatexts are not chosen or written by the author, they may perform a completely different function from the text—in plays, for instance, the commentary may serve to instruct when the play seeks to delight. In the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, Johnson even recommended that "him, that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the

drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation."[265]

But readers of dictionaries, who generally read or scan them entry by entry, encounter the metatext alongside the text in such a way that makes the metatext more integral to the text, relatively speaking. While footnotes or endnotes are segregated from the text on which they comment, the metatext within Johnson's *Dictionary* is generally integral or intrusive to one's experience of reading the entry. This is often especially the case in Johnson's *Dictionary*. In the *Dictionary*, if readers want foremost to consult the definition, they must pass through, or leap across, the etymological (loosely defined) brackets to do so.[266] While both the inclusion of predictably located brackets and the brevity of many etymologies often make this leap no great task, the length and discursiveness of many other etymologies discourage readers from leaping without first looking:

> BA'NDOG.n.s. [from *ban* or *band*, and *dog*. The original of this word is very doubtful. *Caius*, *De Canibus Britannicis*,[267] derives it from *band*, that is, *a dog chained up*. *Skinner* inclines to deduce it from *bana*, a *murderer*. May it not come from *ban* a *curse*, as we say a *curst cur*; or rather from *baund*, swelled or large, a *Danish* word; from whence, in some counties they call a great nut a *ban-nut*.] A kind of large dog.
>
> The time of night when Troy was set on fire,
> The time when screech-owls cry, and *bandogs* howl.
>
> *Shakespeare's Henry VI. ~~p. ii.~~*

[265] "Preface to Shakespeare, 1765," in Yale *Works*, VII, 111.
[266] Sidney I. Landau writes that the placement of etymologies in square brackets, early in the entry, "is seen" by some producers of synchronic dictionaries "as a kind of moat that the reader must leap across to reach his quest," since "of all the elements included in modern dictionaries etymology has the least to do with the essential purpose of a synchronic dictionary." *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 104, 98.
[267] 1755: *de canibus Britannicis*

Or privy, or pert, if any bin,
We have great *bandogs* will tear their skin. *Spens<u>er</u>* ~~*Pastorals.*~~

Not only does the commentary here dwarf the definition in terms of text space used, but it also lends support to Johnson's interpretation of the most salient semantic quality of the word *bandog*. The physical and interpretive proximity of text and the commentary within the brackets here encourages readers not to disregard the commentary. And commentary placed immediately following the definition, thus is distinguished, but not segregated, from the *text* and is thus even less easy to disregard. Commentary that qualifies the definition or describes usage is generally more likely to be heeded by readers. Readers are unlikely to ignore the usage notes appended to the beginning or ending of definitions—these usage notes have, indeed, been one of the most noticed features of the *Dictionary*. Unlike Johnson's hypothetical first-time reader of Shakespeare, a reader of the *Dictionary* who ignored the usage notes would seem sloppy or careless.

The fact that Johnson will place all sorts of commentary both within and without the brackets accustoms readers to be prepared for commentary whether it appears within or outside brackets, before or after the definition. For this reason, even when the predictable location of metatextual space within the structure of the entry distinguishes it from the text and helps readers who are not interested ignore it, the varied nature of commentary placed within textual slots devoted to metatext means that readers will get used to reading the commentary as well, a practice that is encouraged by the recurring interconnections between metatext and text in the *Dictionary*.

Johnson not only uses etymological conjectures to support his definitions, as in the entry for *bandog*. He also uses known etymons to favor spellings. Whereas in a

modern dictionary etymology is less relevant for the purposes of a synchronic dictionary, Johnson uses etymology as a deciding factor when determining a certain spelling variant as "proper" or "improper." He "always considered" that "true orthography" of words "as depending on their derivation."[268] Johnson demonstrates this under the definitions for *crawfish* and *sapphire*:

> CRA'WFISH.n.s. [sometimes written *crayfish*, properly *crevice*; in French *ecrevisse*.] . . .
>
> SA'PPHIRE.n.s. [*sapphirus*, Latin: so that it is improperly written *saphyre*.] . . .

Johnson's etymological note becomes the basis for his comment on spelling.

Occasionally, text and metatext will shade into one another in an entry, as in the following entry, shown as it appears in the *Dictionary*:

> BATE seems to have been once the preterite of *bite*, as *Shakespeare* uses *biting faulchion*; unless, in the following lines, it may be rather deduced from *beat*.
>
> Yet there the steel staid not, but inly *bate*
> Deep in his flesh, and open'd wide a red flood gate. *Spenser*.[269]

Here we see Johnson using parallel textual examples and conjectural deduction to work out the definition of *bate* as it appears in Spenser's usage. Johnson's definition becomes inseparable from his commentary as he displays his philogical reasoning, and complementary philological strategies (derivation, parallel readings, and parsing) overlap freely.

The interconnectedness of Johnson's interpretive strategies, the interplay between text and metatext, can also be seen under the definition for *scroyle*, where Johnson

[268] Preface, para. 11.
[269] 1755: *F. Queen*.

interprets a word he "remember[s] only in *Shakespeare*" by proposing a derivational link to a French word, and by adducing similar examples of Shakespearean insult-formation:

> SCROYLE. n.s. [This word I remember only in *Shakespeare*: it seems derived from *escrouelle*, French, a scrofulous swelling; as he calls a mean fellow a *scab* from his itch, or a *patch* from his raggedness.[270]] A mean fellow; a rascal; a wretch.
>
> The *scroyles* of Angiers flout you kings,
> And stand securely on their battlements,
> As in a theatre. *Shakespeare's King John*.

The illustrative quotation, as printed, does not really provide enough evidence for the definition, which presumably is aided by the larger context of the passage, in which the moral character attributed to the "scroyles of Angiers" is more clear. Here the proposed etymology, along with evidence from analogous words used by Shakespeare, serves as crucial evidence for Johnson's interpretation of the word. The O.E.D. maintains that the "assumed development of sense" from OF. *escroele* to *scroyle*, "though plausible, has no evidence." Johnson's commentary in effect makes visible the posited process of semantic change he assumes in making sense of the word as he does. As a result the proposed definition is even more plausible. Here we see Johnson as etymologist, as scholiast, and as philologer, and we see how those roles interact. We see a connection between Johnson's observation of language change as observed in usage, and the kinds of assumptions about language change that Johnson draws on when engaged in etymological reasoning, where he often posits what he views to be plausible shifts in meaning from etymon to head-word.

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[270] For citations of Shakespeare's use in this way of *scab* and *patch*, see C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Enlarged and revised throughout by Robert D. Eagleson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

The distinction between *text* and *metatext* in the *Dictionary* has its limitations and exceptions, and there are many places where Johnson's metatext overlaps the text unannounced by any typographic distinctions or demarcations, as, for instance, when his head words are italicized to indicate that they are not 'naturalized' or when Johnson indicates his spelling preference for a particular spelling form by listing it, and not its variants, as the head word. Some other well known examples attest to the ways in which text and metatext can overlap:

> LEXICO'GRAPHER.n.s. . . . . A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.
>
> I'RONY.n.s. . . . . A mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words: as, *Bolingbroke was a holy man*.

Nonetheless, the distinction between text and metatext is useful because it operates as a fairly predictable norm in most entries, and departures from this norm are still easy to spot when readers keep this distinction in mind. Reading the entries in terms of text and metatext does not require us to ignore the fact that all of Johnson's decisions about what to include in the *Dictionary* involve interpretive decisions at some level. It only allows us to see how some of those interpretive decisions are crucially linked.

IV. "The Structures and Relations of Words": Reading the Dictionary *and its Philology across the Entries*

All studies of the *Dictionary* imply a way of reading through the text, and most studies of the *Dictionary* imply or argue for an understanding of Johnson's intentions. Some of the scholars who have studied the *Dictionary*'s contents most closely—Allen Reddick, Anne McDermott, and Robert DeMaria, Jr.—have all offered different ways to interpret the text, based on the nature of their data sample and their view of Johnson's

aims. Reddick and DeMaria, Jr., in their studies of the *Dictionary*, give most attention to the illustrative quotations, which for Reddick represent the "most significant" area of Johnson's changes to the text when revising it for the fourth edition (1773); in "incorporating extensive new illustrative quotations," Reddick argues, Johnson "appears to have been motivated by a desire to fill out and make more complete the entries as representatives of English usage and, as a part of this process, to infuse many of the entries with a more conscious religious and/or political presence and purpose."[271]

DeMaria, Jr.'s attention to the illustrative quotations and their contents has led him to suggest, first in *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning* and later in several articles, that the *Dictionary* has an "overall theme," that the contents of the quotations, taken together, reveal both "Johnson's wish to make the *Dictionary* an encyclopedia with moral and religious overtones," and "Johnson's overall shaping of his book into a pious encyclopedia with a religious message for learners."[272] While DeMaria has at various times examined different elements of the *Dictionary* entries, his emphasis on the illustrative quotations lends itself to an interpretation that seeks "themes." But as others have pointed out, Johnson may have approved of the sentiment expressed in many individual quotes, but DeMaria finds thematic connections quotations that are scattered across the body of the *Dictionary*, and connects quotes that were not necessarily intended

[271] Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's* Dictionary, 94.
[272] Robert DeMaria, Jr., "Johnson's *Dictionary*," *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, Greg Clingham, ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 94, 89, 95. DeMaria, Jr. explains his rationale for "reading the dictionary as a disguised encyclopedia" and his method for identifying in the quotations "what seemed to me to be the most important topics" in his "Preface" to *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), ix, x.

to be connected, since the primary purpose of the quotations is to illustrate the usage of a word.

Positing themes in the *Dictionary* presumes that Johnson intended links among quotes in the large folio, that readers who consult the *Dictionary* would make those connections, and that Johnson hoped or expected that readers of the *Dictionary* would make those connections. The kind of reader who might make those connections is extremely rare—the kind of assiduous, methodical reader DeMaria shows himself to be in *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning*. To make the thematic connections, DeMaria must read the *Dictionary* in ways that are atypical and counterintuitive. After reading the *Dictionary* as a "disguised encyclopedia," he indexes its contents to "overcome the obscuring tendency of the alphabetical order," a tendency that must certainly stand in the way of the reader's ability to grasp those themes.[273]

While many quotations may certainly, as Johnson says he first intended, "be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word," in the end he had to "reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words, in which scarcely any meaning is retained."[274] Many individual quotations, in fact, convey no message at all, but are truncated passages meant first to illustrate usage, as can be seen in the definition for *to moralize*:

> To MO'RALIZE.v.a. [*moraliser*, French.]
> 1. To apply to moral purposes; to explain in a moral sense.
>
> He 'as left me here behind to expound the meaning or moral of his signs and tokens.
>
> —— I pray thee *moralize* them. *Shak. Taming of the Shrew*.
>
> Did he not *moralize* this spectacle?
>
> —— O yes, into a thousand similies. *Shakespeare*.

[273] DeMaria, Jr. *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning*, ix-x.
[274] Preface, para. 57.

This fable is *moralized* in a common proverb. *L'Estrange*.

2. In *Spenser* it seems to mean, to furnish with manners or examples.

Fierce warres and faithful loves shall *moralize* my song. *Fairy Queen*.[275]

3. In *Prior*, who imitates the foregoing line, it has a sense not easily discovered, if indeed it has any sense.

High as their trumpets tune his lyre he strung,
And with his prince's arms he *moraliz'd* his song. *Prior*.

The quotes in any given passage, much less quotes across the body of the *Dictionary*, may contradict or have little relation to one another beyond lexical semantic content as much as they contribute to a moral theme, presuming those quotes contain a didactic or educational message at all. Anne McDermott has argued that Johnson's

> standards of morality were not so rigid as to exclude entertaining and humorous texts which might have slightly vulgar contents, and he was not above quoting indecent passages from those texts. . . . [I]t seems that he excluded quotations from texts which were doctrinally suspect or which contained moral *theories* which were dubious or misleading in his view. Texts which one might regard as indecent rather than immoral seem not to have troubled him overmuch.[276]

DeMaria's approach turns a secondary concern of Johnson's—presenting useful, pleasing, and socially responsible quotations—into the lexicographer's primary aim.

In *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary, 1746-1773*, Allen Reddick also focuses largely on the illustrative quotations but his recognition of the way these quotations are scattered across the text and his examination of Johnson's revisions to his quotations lead him to argue, in contrast to DeMaria, that the rhetoric of the text is ultimately found not so much in themes connected among quotations scattered throughout the *Dictionary*, but rather within the individual entry. On the basis of several illustrative quotations added to the revised *Dictionary* of 1773, Reddick argues that in the revised edition Johnson

[275] 1755: *Fairy Queen*, *b.* i.
[276] Anne McDermott, "Textual Transformations: *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* in Johnson's *Dictionary*," *Studies in Bibliography* 48 (1995): 147.

pursued a "sacred program," adding to the text several Biblical and Miltonic quotations, as well as quotations from the writings of "orthodox Anglican controversialists." Reddick, like DeMaria, finds in Johnson's quotations that the lexicographer "supplies 'a stream of reminders,' in Robert DeMaria's phrase, of particular issues and arguments, pushed repeatedly before the eyes of the reader." But because "the *Dictionary* can only fitfully sustain the author's polemic, the arguments become diffused. Therefore, the empowerment of the *Dictionary* as a tool for general education on and apology for the Church in danger remains largely unrealized." While Reddick acknowledges that the nature of a dictionary places constraints on one's ability to sustain any polemic by means of disconnected quotations across hundreds of pages, he suggests that Johnson "could, however, develop a persistent rhetoric" at the level of the entry. In Johnson's revisions Reddick sees Johnson's the additions of quotes from the Bible, from Milton, and from theological sources as providing "many entries with overt theological reference."[277]

Reddick returns to his argument about the "rhetoric" of the *Dictionary* in a later article, wherein he argues that the "rhetorical nature of the unit of the entry, or sub-entry, determines the voice, significance, the nature of the text on the page." Reddick argues that any polemical content that quotations might contain is limited by their lexicographic function as examples of usage to illustrate a definition. So a quotation's "original declamatory meaning, one could argue in most cases of quotation in the *Dictionary*, is virtually held in abeyance, estranged from context and clear reference and signification."

[277] Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 128, 121, 144, 164, 165.

Because of these limitations, Reddick finally argues that the *Dictionary* is "didactic primarily in terms of style (linguistic competence) rather than content."[278]

Anne McDermott and Marcus Walsh have provided the only theorized account to date of how to read the *Dictionary* in "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*: Some Editorial and Textual Considerations." In this account, McDermott and Walsh are concerned to describe a theoretically sound approach to producing a critical edition of the *Dictionary*. Adopting E. D. Hirsch's definition of literature—"Literature comprises any linguistic work, written or oral, which has significant aesthetic qualities *when described in aesthetic categories*"—McDermott and Walsh argue that Johnson's *Dictionary* "has features which make it possible, when it is viewed from an aesthetic perspective, to treat it as a literary work." Thus they address the issues of determining authorial intention, choosing the copy-text, and they are also concerned with clarifying the nature of the *Dictionary* as a text type, since the "*Dictionary* is unlike almost any other text that literary scholars edit."[279]

McDermott and Walsh adopt Michael Hoey's concept of the "discourse colony" to argue that the difference between the *Dictionary* and other literary texts (poems, plays, novels, etc.) is "not simply one of genre but of discourse type."[280] The specificity of Hoey's concept, as described by McDermott and Walsh, is best related in an extended quote:

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[278] Reddick, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and its Texts," 67, 71, 75.
[279] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 42-43, 50.
[280] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 48. They draw Michael Hoey's concept of the "discourse colony" from "The Discourse Colony: A Preliminary Study of a Neglected Discourse Type," in *Talking about Text: Studies Presented to David Brazil on His Retirement*, ed. Malcolm Coulthard (Birmingham, England: English Language Research, 1986), 1-26.

> Hoey suggests that certain texts differ from 'mainstream' discourses in being made up of a collection of discrete elements with no cohesive ties between them. The elements 'do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed.' He graphically compares these discourses to the colonies of a beehive or an ant-hill, in which the individual creatures serve a superior end, do not survive easily outside the colony, and enter the colony in arbitrary order. It is important to note that each individual element in a discourse colony is itself, like a bee, an independent organism. The order of the elements in a discourse colony can normally be altered with very little damage to its semantic unity, but an individual organism within the colony can be no more safely scrambled than a 'mainstream' discourse as a whole. The characteristics of a discourse colony are shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by texts as various as a hymn-book and a shopping list, an encyclopedia and a telephone directory, a dictionary and a newspaper. Some of the common features are identified by Hoey:
>
> 1. Meaning not derived from sequence;
> 2. Adjacent units do not form continuous prose;
> 3. There is a framing context;
> 4. No single author and/or anon;
> 5. One component may be used without referring to the others;
> 6. Components can be reprinted or reused in subsequent works;
> 7. Components can be added, removed, or altered;
> 8. Many of the components serve the same function;
> 9. Alphabetic, numeric, or temporal sequencing.
>
> Not all discourse colonies share all these features, but all have features 1 and 2 in common. Hoey suggests that the only discourse types which display all nine features are dictionaries and encyclopedias.[281]

Hoey's concept of the discourse colony is useful for McDermott and Walsh because it helps them explain their decision to use both the first and fourth editions of the *Dictionary* as copy-texts for a critical edition. McDermott and Walsh's assessment of the *Dictionary* as a discourse colony leads them to complicate common notions of a work's "version" and authorial intention. They argue that unlike many literary texts whose individual versions represent an ideal, coherent form of the text, a "discourse colony is

[281] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 49.

generated by a very much more diffuse creative act than a 'mainstream' discourse."[282]

Thus for McDermott and Walsh,

> Editions 1 and 4 are not versions, but realizations at particular moments of what was in fact a continuous process of alteration, addition, and omission; there was never a moment of which it is possible to say that Johnson's concept of the *Dictionary* was unified and complete. . . . If it is problematic to speak of versions in relation to the *Dictionary*, then, equally, it is problematic to speak of the author's 'final' intention regarding the whole work. What we have is a series of realized intentions of particular entries in the *Dictionary*, but no overall intention, whether final or otherwise, in respect of the whole work.[283]

By considering individual entries as discrete, independent "organisms" within the colony, McDermott and Walsh are free to look at each single entry in editions 1 and 4 as a potential copy-text for their proposed critical edition. In addition, their view of the *Dictionary*'s composition as a "continuous process of alteration, addition, and omission" allows them, as well, to maintain a reasonably complicated notion of authorial intention—one that does not restrict them to choosing edition 1 or 4. McDermott and Walsh are making the case for a modern critical edition of the *Dictionary*, a work regarded, they write, as a literary classic now more than a contemporarily relevant work of reference.[284] Because their prospected critical edition would likely be used primarily by literary scholars, the concept of the discourse colony is useful in allowing them to maintain traditional categories of literary textual editing while acknowledging the significant ways in which the *Dictionary* differs from most texts regarded as literary.

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[282] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 55.
[283] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 55-56.
[284] McDermott and Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 43.

But if one is not reading the *Dictionary* as a literary text, but rather as the kind of instrumental text that McDermott and Walsh say Johnson intended it to be, the concept of the discourse colony is problematic, particularly in its insistence on the discreteness, the independence, of dictionary entries. Monolingual dictionaries, in fact, are remarkably cohesive, since the meaning and utility of individual definitions may need to rely on words from other entries. Sidney I. Landau has described this fact in discussing two principles of defining which, if violated, "defeat the whole purpose of the dictionary": *avoid circularity*, and *define every word in the definition*.[285] For instance, someone faced with the following circular definitions would remain uninstructed:

beauty- the state of being beautiful

beautiful- full of beauty

To avoid circular definitions, Landau writes, lexicographers must not, for instance, define a word "by itself, and no word can be defined from its own family of words unless the related word is separately defined independently of it."[286] The second principle, *define every word in the definition*, links the definition of a word X to entries for every word used to define X. Thus Johnson's first signification for the noun *propinquity* is connected to the definitions for *nearness*, *proximity*, and *neighborhood*:

PROPI'NQUITY.n.s. [*propinquitas*, Lat.] 1. Nearness; proximity; neighbourhood.

And the definitions for *nearness*, *proximity*, and *neighbourhood* are linked in turn to the entries for every word used to define them. Individual instances of failure to follow this

[285] Landau, *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*, 124-25.
[286] Landau, *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*, 125. The above examples of *beauty* and *beautiful* are Landau's; see 124. Johnson writes in the Preface that "some explanations are unavoidably reciprocal or circular, as *hind*, *the female of the stag*; *stag*, *the female of the hind*." Preface, para. 55.

principle of defining are difficult to prevent entirely, but each failure diminishes the maximal utility of a dictionary.

In addition to these connections among entries, Johnson includes explicit cross-references from one entry to another.[287] The entry for the noun *greeze* contains three cross-referents, including one dead-end referent, *grieze*, and the entry for *grise*, not mentioned as a cross-referent under the entry for *greeze*, refers the reader back again to *greeze*:

> GREEZE.n.s. [Otherwise written *greece*. See GREECE, or GRIEZE, or GRICE;[288] from *degrees*.] A flight of steps; a step.[289]
>
> GRISE.n.s. [See GREEZE, as it should be written.] A step, or scale of steps. . . .

Two other entries are similarly linked to these, even though they are not explicitly marked as cross-referents with the "See X" formula:

> GREECE.n.s. [corrupted from *degrees*. It is written likewise *greeze* or *grice*.] A flight of steps. Obsolete. . . .
>
> GRICE.n.s. 2. A step or *greeze*. . . .

The commentary added to *greece* in the fourth edition links it to the entries for *greeze* and *grice*. Rather than employ the common practice of listing lexical variants alongside each other as he often does, Johnson accords each attested form an entry of its own. Yet clearly these entries are closely linked to one another—Johnson's preference for the spelling *greeze* is not mentioned explicitly except under the entry for *grise*, and the presumed source for all these variants is only mentioned under *greece* and *greeze*.

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[287] Sometimes, however, Johnson neglects to follow through on the reference. For example, sense 13 of the noun *assurance* (1755: sense 11) reads, "the same with *insurance*. See INSURANCE," but the *Dictionary* contains no entry for *insurance*.
[288] 1755: GRICE,
[289] The first edition illustrates this definition with a quote from *Shakespeare's Timon of Athens*.

Johnson's cues to cross-references in the *Dictionary*—both explicit ("See X") and implicit (the italicized variants listed under *greece* and *grice*)—support the kind of cross-entry reading that he encourages in the Preface, a type of reading that is both more intuitive than reading for theme or reading without recognition of the links among entries, and furthermore such cross-entry reading is consonant with Johnson's representations of his most important duty as a lexicographer: linguistic education, or the "elucidation of our language."[290] Both in the *Plan* and the Preface Johnson suggests that part of his task was to help clarify how the parts of the language fit together—to clarify the structure and relations of words and their constituent parts. Reading across entries would help readers grasp the "structures and relations" of English words, which in previous dictionaries, according to Johnson, seemed a "confused heap. . . without dependence, and without relation."[291] To consider individual entries as independent organisms would discourage the observation of connections that might elucidate the language.

In justifying the need and rationale for his *Dictionary*, Johnson suggests that his methods, unlike those of dictionaries wherein words are only a "confused heap," will by contrast "facilitate the attainment of our language" when the parts of the language are viewed as they relate to the whole language. Employing the language of natural philosophy, Johnson declares a hope that his *Dictionary* will contain the "fundamental atoms of our speech," that in the *Dictionary* "our language will be laid down, distinct in its minutest subdivisions, and resolved into its elemental principles." And in discussing phrasal verbs, Johnson writes that words "having been hitherto considered as separate

[290] Preface, para. 42.
[291] Preface, para. 59; *Plan*, para. 25.

and unconnected, are now to be likewise examined as they are ranged in their various relations to others by the rules of SYNTAX or construction, to which I do not know that any regard has been yet shewn in English dictionaries, and in which the grammarians can give little assistance."[292]

In the Preface Johnson defends his practices by suggesting that they contribute to understanding the "frame" or "general fabrick" of the language. Johnson defends his frequent practice of referring derivatives (*remoteness*) to their primitives (*remote*) with an "accuracy sometimes needless" by protesting that it "is of great importance in examining the general fabrick of a language, to trace one word from another, by noting the usual modes of derivation and inflection." And Johnson expresses satisfaction that the number of compounded words he includes "might be multiplied, but that use and curiosity are here satisfied, and the frame of our language and modes of our combination amply discovered." Johnson also writes that he chooses quotations "which are to teach" the "structures and relations" of words.[293] Johnson encouraged users of the *Dictionary* to compare related entries, to pursue connections among entries, which sometimes had to be read in relation to one another to clarify or rectify deficiencies of a single entry:

> Such is the exuberance of signification which many words have obtained, that it was scarcely possible to collect all their senses; sometimes the meaning of derivatives must be sought in the mother term, and sometimes deficient explanations of the primitive may be supplied in the train of derivation. In any case of doubt or difficulty, it will be always proper to examine all the words of the same race; for some words are slightly passed over to avoid repetition, some will be admitted easier and clearer explanation than others, and all will be better understood, as they are considered in greater variety of structure and relations.[294]

[292] *Plan*, paras. 25, 34, 36.
[293] Preface, paras. 38, 20, 59.
[294] Preface, para. 53.

So even though each entry in the *Dictionary* is structurally and typographically separate from one another on the page, and is consulted often as a self-sufficient unit, entries in many ways are linked to one another, and as the above paragraph suggests, some entries—for instance the entries related to *greeze*—may illuminate one another. Under *bashful* Johnson precedes a list of etymological conjectures by declaring, "This word, with all those of the same race, are of uncertain etymology." Presumably, Johnson refers to *bashful* and *bashfulness*, as well as *to abash*, which refers the reader to *bashful*. In the commentary for the word *mirksome*, Johnson writes a note on spelling that applies to all "derivatives of this set": "[*morck*, dark, Danish. In the derivatives of this set, no regular orthography is observed: it is common to write *murky*, to which the rest ought to conform.]." The "derivatives of this set" may include entries for *murk*, *murky*, and *moky*, which for Johnson "seems a corruption of *murky*."[295]

Johnson attempts to elucidate the "frame of our language and modes of our combination" by "inserting great numbers of compounded words," since the process of compounding, or "composition," is "one of the chief characteristics of a language."[296] Thus Johnson includes a separate entry for *by*, which reads thus:

> BY, in composition, implies something out of the direct way; and, consequently, some obscurity, as a *by-road*; something irregular, as a *by-end*; or something collateral, as a *by-concernment*; or private, as a *by-law*. This composition is used at pleasure, and will be understood by the examples following.

[295] See also See also To BASTE.v.a., which defines as meaning, among other things, "To beat with a stick." After noting the French cognate *bastonner*, Johnson writes that "*Bazata*, in the Armorick dialect, signifies to strike with a stick; from which perhaps *baston* a stick, and all its derivatives, or collaterals, may be deduced."
[296] Preface, para. 38.

So aside from their status as discrete entries, the several entries beginning with *by-* (*by-coffeehouse* through *by-word*) may also function as examples of a process of linguistic "composition." While etymologists now have a different and more complex story to tell about these examples of *by*, this entry shows how Johnson relates entries by comparing their structures and relations to one another. For Johnson, it is only by relating the various entries that this composition "will be understood." A similar connection exists between several entries (*to foreadvise*, *to foreappoint*, *to forebode*, etc.) and the entry for the adverb *fore*, "a word much used in composition to mark priority of time, of which some examples shall be given."[297]

Some entries are connected through a loose network of explicit cross-references and implicit derivational and spelling similarities. In the following related entries, one who starts with one related set of entries and follow cross-references, variants, and etymons from one entry to another, to discover one set of "words of the same race" (Preface, para. 53). There is *berg*, its variant *burrow*, and its derivatives[298]:

> BERG. See BURROW.
> BE'RGMASTER.n.s. [from *berg*, Sax. and master.] The bailiff, or chief officer, among the Derbyshire miners.
> BE'RGMOTE. n.s. [of *berg*, a mountain, and *mote*, a meeting, Saxon.] A court held upon a hill for deciding controversies among the Derbyshire miners. *Blount*.

There is *burgh*, another variant of *burrow*, and its derivatives:

> BURGH. n.s. [See BURROW.] A corporate town or borrow[299]. . . .
> BU'RGHER.n.s. [from *burgh.*] One who has a right to certain privileges in this or that place. *Locke*. . . .

[297] In 1773 Johnson adds, "A vitious orthography has confounded *for* and *fore* in composition."
[298] It is not clear that Johnson considers *bergmaster* and *bergmote* as derivatives of the *berg* that he lists as a variant of *burrow*, since he lists them as deriving from Saxon *berg*, and he presents the *berg* listed as a variant of *burrow* as a derivative of "the Saxon *burg*, *byrg*."
[299] 1755: burrow

BU'RGHERSHIP.n.s. [from *burgher*.] . . . .
BU'RGHMASTER.See BURGOMASTER.

There is *burg*, its variant *burrow*, and their derivatives:

BURG. n.s. See BURROW.
BU'RGAGE.n.s.[from *burg* or *burrow*.] A tenure proper to cities and towns, whereby men of cities or burrows hold their lands or tenements of the king, or other lord, for a certain yearly rent. *Cowel*. . . . .
BU'RGLARY.n.s. [from *burg*, a house, and *larron*, a thief.] . . . .
BU'RGOMASTER.n.s. [from *burg* and *master*.] One employed in the government of a city. . . .

As well, we find a variant of *burgomaster*:

BU'RGHMASTER.See BURGOMASTER.

And we find *burrow*, *berg*, *burg*, and *burgh* listed as variants, all derived from "the Saxon *burg*, *byrg*":

BU'RROW, BERG, BURG, BURGH. n.s. [derived from the Saxon *burg*, *byrg*, a city, tower, or castle. *Gibson's Camden*.] 1. A corporate town, that is not a city, but such as sends burgesses to the parliament. All places that, in former days, were called *borough*, were such as were fenced or fortified. *Cowel*. . . . .

The use of *borough* in this illustration links this group of entries to that entry, and the etymology, linking these forms to the Saxon term for a "city, tower, or castle," links the group as well to the entry for *burh*, whose illustrative examples, *cwenburh* and *cuthbur*, seem to be implicit examples of "composition" in Old English, or in Johnson's terms, "Saxon":

BURH, is a tower; and from that, a defence or protection; so *Cwenburh* is a woman ready to assist; *Cuthbur* eminent for assistance. *Gibson's Camden*.

Johnson frequently includes entries for Old English words and morphemes that are often found in compounds, for instance those found in place names (*caster,* or *chester*; *comb*; *stead*; *thorp*), thus providing further examples of the structure and relations in the

presumed parent language of English. The example of *cuthbur* may be further elucidated by the entry for *cuth*, also taken from Edmund Gibson's edition of early modern antiquary William Camden's *Britannia*:

> CUTH, signifies knowledge or skill. So *Cuthwin* is a knowing conqueror; *Cuthred* a knowing counsellor; *Cuthbert*, famous for skill. Much of the same nature are *Sophocles* and *Sophianus*. *Gib. Camden*.

Users of the *Dictionary* can find other examples of Old English compounding by looking up the compounded elements of *cuthwin*, *cuthred*, and *cuthbert*—the entries for *win*, *bert*, and *rad*, which, according to "Gibson's Camden," differs only from *red* and *rod* "only in dialect."

The pursuit of these cross-entry connections is both encouraged by Johnson and facilitated by the nature of the *Dictionary*, in which Johnson either notes cross-references explicitly, or the cross-references suggest themselves to readers who investigate a headword's related terms, whether they be variants, derivatives of a common etymon, or elements of a compound word. By contrast, the thematic approach to reading the *Dictionary*, as DeMaria admits, requires finding ways to circumvent its structure—to "overcome the obscuring tendency of the alphabetical order."[300] And viewing the *Dictionary* as a discourse colony obscures the extent to which its entries are interrelated in ways that Johnson intended, and in ways that illuminate Johnson's philological methods.

* * * * * *

[300] DeMaria, Jr. *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning*, x.

By following connections among entries readers begin to see what appear to be Johnson's own connections between different entries, his own observations of the "structure and relations" of the language, and how those observations inform his philological judgments. For example, Johnson's conjectural etymology of *bumpkin* (defined as an "awkward or heavy rustick; a country lout") seems to employ etymological reasoning based on his various observations of English "composition" and his sense that all words "will be better understood, as they are considered in greater variety of structure and relations"[301]:

> BU'MPKIN.n.s. [This word is of uncertain etymology; *Henshaw* derives it from *pumkin*, a kind of worthless gourd, or melon.[302] This seems harsh; yet we use the word *cabbage-head* in the same sense. *Bump* is used amongst us for a knob, or lump; may not *bumpkin* be much the same with *clodpate*, *loggerhead*, *block*, and *blockhead*.]

Johnson prefers to analyze *bumpkin* as a compound presumably analogous to others in the language rather than accept Henshaw's less complicated derivation, which only requires a sound change from *p* to *b* and metaphorical extension. Johnson's etymology for *loggerhead* proposes that the compound element *logger* derives from "*logge*, Dutch, *stupid*, and *head*; or rather from *log*, a heavy motionless mass, as *blockhead*." Johnson's derivation in *bumpkin* seems to prefer that *logger* be derived from *log*, "a heavy motionless mass," which would make the element *logger* more analogous to *clod*, *block*, and *bump*. Other entries suggest Johnson's understanding of the *kin* in *bumpkin*: Johnson's fifth sense of *kin*, "A diminutive termination from *kind*, a child, Dutch: as,

[301] Preface, para. 53.
[302] Lewis Freed identifies Henshaw as Thomas Henshaw (1618-1700), the editor of Stephen Skinner's *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae*. See "The Sources of Johnson's Dictionary," (PhD diss. Cornell University, 1939), 38, 63.

manikin, *manikin*, *thomkin*, *wilkin*;"[303] his interpretation of *kin* to mean "little" under the definition for *diminutive*: "*manniken*, in English, a *little man*;" and his etymology of *malkin*, in which the etymology supports the gloss on Shakespeare that Johnson includes from Thomas Hanmer's edition of Shakespeare.

> MA'LKIN.n.s. [from *mal*, of *Mary*, and *kin*, the diminutive termination.] A kind of mop made of clouts for sweeping ovens; thence a frightful figure of clouts dressed up; thence a dirty wench. *Hanmer*.
>
> The kitchen *Malkin* pins
> Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,
> Clamb'ring the walls to eye him. *Shakesp. Coriolanus*

So if we consider individual entries as discrete units, unconnected to the rest of the *Dictionary*, we will overlook the kinds of cross-entry connections that Johnson often relies on to make his philological judgments. Moreover, we will overlook a way of reading the *Dictionary* that Johnson encouraged his readers to attempt.

While the reasoning of some philological judgments in the *Dictionary* may be clarified by contextualizing them via fairly obvious cross-entry connections, the reasoning of other philological judgments is only made clear by comparing them with related judgments found in the body of the *Dictionary*. This kind of comparison requires more familiarity with the *Dictionary* and more systematic scrutiny than the average user might bring to the text, yet it suggests that even when connections between the commentary in different entries are not made explicit for the reader, they were fully available to Johnson, whose philological judgment or etymology in one entry may be

[303] The *Dictionary* does not include entries for *thomkin* and *wilkin*, examples added to this note in the fourth edition, but does include an entry for *lambkin*, "a little lamb."

influenced by, among other things, his observations in another entry or several other entries.

For instance, in attempting the etymology of the adjective *slope*, Johnson adduces a presumed Dutch cognate, *loopen*, in which the etymon, the "original," may "be latent":

> SLOPE. adj. [This word is not derived from any satisfactory original. *Junius* omits it: *Skinner* derives it from *slap*, lax, Dutch; and derives it from the curve of a loose rope. Perhaps its original may be latent in *loopen*, Dutch, to run, *slope* being easy to the runner.] Oblique; not perpendicular. It is generally used of acclivity or declivity; forming an angle greater or less with the plane of the horizon. *Bacon; Milton*.

Johnson's suggestion that English *slope* and Dutch *loopen* derive from a common "original" seems questionable on semantic grounds, which seem to provide the major rationale for Johnson's positing the connection. But several other entries under the letter *S* reveal other data upon which Johnson may be connecting *slope* and *loopen* by means of sound change, not just tenuous semantic connections. Johnson's commentary in other entries suggest assumes the existence of a sound change whereby *s* is added to the beginning of words beginning with *c*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *q*, and *t*, so that the consonant clusters *sc*, *sk*, *sl*, *sm*, *sn*, *sp*, *sq*, and *st* are created. Johnson assumes such a sound change, or "corruption," in his derivation of *scragged*, *scraggy*, and *spruceleather,* and he considers this sound change as a possibility in the etymology for the verb *smilt*:

> SCRA´GGED. adj. [This seems corrupted from *cragged*.] . . . .
>
> SCRA´GGY. n.s. 2. [Corrupted from *craggy*.] . . . .
>
> SPRU´CELEATHER. n.s. [Corrupted for *Prussian leather*.] <no definition> *Arbuthnot* <no quote>; *Dryden's Fables*.
>
> To SMILT. v.n. [corrupted from *smelt*, or *melt*.] <The quote functions as the definition.>

> Having too much water, many corns will *smilt*, or have their pulp turned into a substance like thick cream. *Mortimer*.

Johnson also assumes such a change produced the verb *smirch*, one sense of the noun *squash*, and the adjective *squeamish*:

> To SMIRCH. v.a. [from *murk* or *murky*.] . . . *Shakespeare* <2 times>
>
> SQUASH. n.s. . . . [from *quash*.] 3. Any thing unripe; any thing soft. In contempt. *Shakespeare's Winter's Tale*. ...
>
> SQUEA´MISH. adj. [for *quawmish* or *qualmish*, from *qualm*.] Nice; fastidious; easily disgusted; having the stomach easily turned; being apt to take offence without much reason. it is used always in dislike real or ironical. *Sidney*; *Hudibras*; *Southern*; *South*; *Locke*.

In deriving *to slop* from *lap*, Johnson seems to demonstrate his idea of how it changed, again presuming a sound change, the addition of initial *s*, in order to buttress the connection he sees at the semantic level:

> To SLOP. v.n. [from *lap*, *lop*, *slop*.] To drink grossly and greedily. <No quote.>

In the etymologies for *spruce* and *to stumble*, Johnson's disagreements with other etymologists rely in part on his faith in the plausibility of this type of sound change:

> SPRUCE. adj. [*Skinner* derives this word from *preux*, French; but he proposes it with hesitation: *Junius* thinks it comes from *sprout*; *Casaubon* trifles yet more contemptibly. I know not whence to deduce it, except from *pruce*. In ancient books we find furniture of *pruce* a thing costly and elegant, and thence probably came *spruce*.] Nice; trim; neat without elegance. <u>It was anciently used of things with a serious meaning: it is now used only of persons, and with levity</u>. *Donne* <2 times>; *Milton*; *Boyle*; *Hudibras*; *Tatler*; *Arbuthnot*.
>
> To STUMBLE. v.n. [This word *Junius* derives from *stump*, and says the original meaning is to *strike*, or *trip against a stump*. I rather think it comes from *tumble*.]
>
> 1. To trip in walking. . . .
> 2. To slip; to err; to slide into crimes or blunders. . . .
> 3. To strike against by chance; to light on by chance: <u>with *upon*</u>. . . . .

In addition to the assumption of this sound change in these entries, Johnson records etymons, cognates, or variants that presume or suggest such a change in the entries for *to scrabble* v.n., *screen* n.s., *to slam* v.a., *to slash* v.a. 2., *sleeveless* adj. 2., *slippery* adj. 7., *to slubber* v.a., *to sneeze* v.n., *to splash* v.n., *to splice* v.a., *spurge*, n.s., *to squabble* v.n., *square* adj., *square* n.s. 5, and *to squeeze* v.a.[304]

These less explicit cross-entry connections provide an important context for Johnson's judgments in individual entries, such as Johnson's conjecture that the adjective *slope* and Dutch *loopen* are etymologically related—a conjecture that might be less understandable without the context of similar commentary throughout the *Dictionary*. This larger context of entry connections is necessary for any scholar who wants to read it with an eye toward claiming what Johnson was doing, philologically speaking, in the *Dictionary*. This is not to say that Johnson expected readers to make these connections, or that he was always fully conscious of applying these connections himself. But when we note such patterns in Johnson's practices that shed light on otherwise puzzling or inexplicable judgments, those patterns may reveal Johnson applying what Anne McDermott, in another context, has termed "an unstated, unacknowledged principle."[305] In the above examples, it seems that Johnson was applying, or relying on, his ideas about

[304] I exclude the following examples from this list because they may imply not that Johnson presumes the addition of an initial *s*, but rather a change from *k* to *s*: *to snap* v.a. [The same with *knap*.]. . . , *snapsack* n.s. [*snappsack*, Swedish.] A soldier's bag: more usually *knapsack* , and *snub* n.s. [from *snebbe*, Dutch, a nose, or *knubel*, a joint of the finger.]. Johnson could have understood the appearance of *s* in these examples to have occurred after the *k* was lost, in which case the presumed sound change would be like the others in the list; or the *k* could have changed into an *s*. I do not attempt here to determine whether or not the s-initial examples are instances of the phenomenon Indo-Europeanists know as *s-mobilé*.

[305] McDermott, "Textual Transformations," : 134. McDermott uses the phrase in the following context: "While it is broadly true that the majority of source texts in the *Dictionary* fulfill his criteria of being 'pleasing and useful', some appear to be neither and so raise the possibility of an unstated, unacknowledged principle of selection in operation."

what kinds of derivation is plausible, given the other data that he had accumulated and examined over the course of his work on the *Dictionary*. By recontextualizing Johnson's comments with his comments in other entries, we may begin to see why Johnson thought certain derivations were more plausible than others—why he derived *stumble* from *tumble*, rather than *stump*, which has problems of its own. Whether or not Johnson was often correct, or often original, in his etymologies is not the issue here. Johnson was often wrong, in hindsight, and, like all other lexicographers, he borrowed from his predecessors. But even Johnson's errors reveal something about Johnson's views on language change and his linguistic reasoning in action. And Johnson presumably only borrowed the comments or judgments of others when he deemed them plausible, possible, worth repeating, or worth refuting.

* * * * * *

Our understanding of Johnson's philological practices and principles benefits from contextualizing his individual comments with respect to the metatext both inside the entry and across related entries. When seen in these contexts, Johnson's inclusion of Scottish words and other dialectal forms in the *Dictionary* reveals one aspect of his philological methods: he uses contemporary dialect, or the testimony of oral language to buttress or amplify his conjectural interpretations, whether they are tentative definitions, etymologies, or glosses on older usage.

> GI'GLET.n.s. [*geagl*, Saxon; *geyl*, Dutch; *gillet*, Scottish, is still retained.] A wanton; a lascivious girl. Now out of use.
>
> Young Talbot was not born
> To be the pillage of a *giglet* wench. *Shakesp. Henry VI.*
> The fam'd Cassibelan was once at point,
> Oh *giglet* fortune! to master Cæsar's sword. *Shak. Cymbel.*

> Away with those *giglets* too, and with the other confederate companion.
> *Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*.

The inclusion of *gillet* among the relevant cognates provides support for the definition of a word out of use in England, and it provides a living link to a presumed *etymon,* Saxon *geagl*. Dutch *geyl* then forms a link between *geagl* and *gillet*, demonstrating the kind of sound change—loss of *g*—which, combined with the addition of a diminutive suffix *et* (a suffix Johnson refers to as a "diminutive termination" in the etymology for *baronet*), would lead to *gillet*. When read together with the headword, the etymons listed seem to demonstrate how one might deduce both *gillet* and *giglet* from *geagl*. These connections between *giglet* and *gillet* appear later as data Johnson uses to offer alternative etymons for the noun *jilt*:

> JILT.n.s. [*gilia*, Islandick, to intrap in an amour, Mr. *Lye*. Perhaps from *giglot*, by contraction; or *gillet*, or *gillot*, the diminutive of *gill*, the ludicrous name for a woman. 'Tis also called *jillet* in Scotland.]
>
> 1. A woman who gives her lover hopes, and deceives him. *Otway's Orphan*.
> 2. A name of contempt for a woman. *Pope*.

Johnson uses the Scots form *jillet*, which for him opens up the possibility of derivation from either *giglot* or the diminutive of *gill*.

Johnson does not only draw on Scots but on the language of his native Staffordshire to provide data where it is philologically instructive or useful. Under the entry for the noun *lich*, presented as it appears in the *Dictionary*, Johnson draws on Scots usage and the name of his home town, Lichfield, to help illustrate the structure and relations of words containing *lich*, as he does with the entries for *burh* and *cuth*, discussed above.

> LICH.n.s. [lice, Saxon.] A dead carcase; whence *lichwake*, the time or act of watching by the dead; *lichgate*, the gate through which the dead are carried to the grave; *Lichfield*, the field of the dead, a city in Staffordshire, so named from martyred christians. *Salve magna parens*. *Lichwake* is still retained in Scotland in the same sense.

Johnson likewise draws on evidence from Staffordshire under the entries for *eame*, *gnarled*, *goldfinch, kecksy*, *moreland*, and *tup*; and from Lichfield under the entry for *minster*:[306]

> EAME.n.s. [*eam*, Saxon; *eom*, Dutch.] Uncle: a word still used in the wilder parts of Staffordshire.
>
> Daughter, says she, fly, fly; behold thy dame
> Foreshows the treason of thy wretched *eame*! *Fairfax*.
>
> GNA'RLED.adj. [*gnar*, *nar*, or *nurr*, is in Staffordshire a hard knot of wood which boys drive with sticks.] Knotty.
>
> Merciful heav'n!
> Thou rather with thy sharp and sulph'rous bolt
> Split'st the unwedgeable and *gnarled* oak,
> Than the soft myrtle. *Shakesp. Measure for Measure*.
>
> KE'CKSY.n.s. [commonly *kex*, *cigue*, French; *cicuta*, Latin. *Skinner*.] *Skinner* seems to think *kecksy* or *kex* the same as hemlock. It is used in Staffordshire both for hemlock, and any other hollow jointed plant.
>
> Nothing teems
> But hateful docks, rough thistles, *kecksies*, burs,
> Losing both beauty and utility. *Shakesp. Henry V.*
>
> TUP.n.s.[I know not of what original.] A ram. This word is yet used in Staffordshire, and in other provinces. <No quote.>

The entry for *gnarled* also suggests that Johnson was paying attention to oral language. His variant spellings (*gnar*, *nar*, or *nurr*) may indicate that he is trying to spell a word he was accustomed to hearing among the boys of Staffordshire, rather than relating variant spellings he has come across in print. Johnson's oral evidence provides support for

[306] Johnson also refers to Staffordshire usage under entries for *goldfinch* and *moreland*, and notes under the entry for the noun *minster*, "The word is yet retained at York and Lichfield."

Johnson's definition, and functions as an etymon that supports the definition Johnson provides, which is partially taken from the Shakespeare passage. As he suggests in his Preface to *The Plays of Shakespeare*, "He that will understand Shakespeare, must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the shop."[307] While in most of the examples Johnson seems to apply dialectal usage to interpretive problems—glossing, defining, or deducing etymologies—the example of *tup*, whose verb form (defined by Johnson as "To but like a ram") is also included by Johnson, shows that Johnson, as Donald T. Siebert argues, was willing to include colloquial language more readily than the Preface might indicate, even when he was not doing so to elucidate interpretive problems posed by etymology or by the process of abstracting definitions from usage.[308]

The entry for *micher* further shows how Johnson draws on dialect and oral language to address his interpretive tasks in the *Dictionary*. Johnson first employs as his definition a gloss from Thomas Hanmer's edition of Shakespeare, and notes that the term is retained "in the cant language," adding in the revised fourth edition how it is "used in the Western counties":

> MI'CHER.n.s. [from *miche*.[309]] A lazy loiterer, who skulks about in corners and by-places, and keeps out of sight; a hedge-creeper. ~~*Hanmer*~~.

[307] "Preface to Shakespeare (1765)," in Yale *Works*, VII, 86.
[308] Johnson may or may not have recalled that the verb *to tup* also refers to the act of copulation between ram and ewe—a sense applied to persons in Shakespeare's *Othello*, I. i. 89-90: "an old black ram / Is *tupping* your white ewe."
[309] The definition of the verb *miche* reads thus, "To MICHE. v.n. To be secret or covered; to lie hid. *Han~~mer~~.* Marry this is *miching* malicho; it means mischief. *Shak<u>esp</u>*" Hanmer is Sir Thomas Hanmer (1677-1746) who produced an edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1744.

Mich or *mick*[310] is still retained in the cant language for an indolent, lazy fellow. It is used in the western counties for a truant boy.

How tenderly her tender hands between
In ivory cage she did the *micher* bind. *Sidney*.

Shall the blessed son of heav'n prove a *micher*, and eat blackberries? a question not to be asked. Shall the son of England prove a thief, and take purses? a question to be asked. *Shakespeare's Henry IV. ~~p. i.~~*

Here the different senses of the entry are not listed separately and enumerated down the column, as they could have been. The comments on cant and provincial usage are tacked on after the definition proper, as is common with usage notes.[311] But while these comments do seem to relegate the forms and senses in question to nonstandard spheres—thus lending the comments a prescriptive function—they seem to be included in the first place not for any prescriptive purpose but rather for their value to philology. If the cant and provincial senses are distinct from one another the senses are not enumerated as separate significations not just because they are usage notes but because they amplify the definition Johnson first lays down—Hanmer's gloss. They comment on the definition while forming part of it. The cant survivals, though changed in form, retain some sense of the word as Hanmer defines it, serving as informal illustrations of the word—alongside the more formal examples of Sidney and Shakespeare. Moreover, they serve as examples of language change. And the comment on Western provincial usage, added to the revision, may not be a usage note or an interesting aside for the philologically curious, but rather a partial reconsideration of Johnson's initial definition, an additional piece of semantic data which may be relevant to how the word is actually used in the Shakespeare

[310] 1755: *Mick*
[311] The comments begin on a new line, rather than following the definition immediately, as is the usual pattern.

and Sidney passages, a semantic nuance latent in the passages that Johnson had missed or not considered when compiling the first edition of the *Dictionary*. The O.E.D., in fact, employs the same passage from the first part of *Henry IV* to illustrate its third definition of *micher*, "A truant; one who improperly absents himself." Dialect in the *Dictionary*, alongside the presentation of parallel textual readings, is another form of evidence for Johnson's definitions when they depend on older texts; and these examples show how Johnson's philology found him moving from the evidence of the page to the evidence of living language, from the language of the past to the language of dialect. As a man who had to negotiate his own way from West Midlands English to the prestige variety spoken in southeastern England, Johnson's philological negotiations between language as he heard it and language as it appeared on print must have been nothing new.

Chapter 3, Johnson's Use of Corruption as a Linguistic Heuristic

I. Introduction

Anyone who reads Johnson's *Plan* or his Preface to the *Dictionary* can see that "corruption" is a concept crucial to Johnson's understanding of language change. In summarizing Johnson's "theories of language," Sledd and Kolb note in their classic study of the *Dictionary* that for Johnson, language change "is often 'corruption.'"[312] Lawrence Lipking suggests that Johnson, in this respect, is typical of his age, noting that when "eighteenth-century writers discuss the causes of linguistic change, the word they use most often is 'corruption.' Other favorites include 'barbarous' and 'cant'. . . . 'Refinement' and 'polite' describe more positive developments."[313] Among modern linguists, Johnson's understanding of linguistic change as corruption contributes as much as anything else to his enduring image as a linguistic purist in an age of purism, as someone whose approach to language study is antithetical to modern, more scientific methods. Johnson is viewed as a pre-linguistic student of the English language whose *Dictionary*, with its "wretched" etymologies and its judgments of "low, bad" words, exemplifies an outdated, prescriptive approach to language study typical of "that pre-Copernican age before philology was born."[314]

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[312] James H. Sledd and Gwin J. Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 27.

[313] Lawrence Lipking, *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, 134. Citing two senses of Johnson's definition of *refinement*, Lipking adds that *refinement* is "often used with a hint of irony," since it may refer to "Improvement in elegance or purity" or "Affectation of elegant improvement."

[314] "Everyone remembers Macaulay's snap verdict: 'Johnson was a wretched etymologist.' He does not tell us who knew any better. Who *should* etymologize, beyond the limits of the obvious, in that pre-Copernican age before philology was born?" R. W. Chapman, *Johnsonian and Other Essays and Reviews* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 132. By "philology" Chapman here means historical and comparative linguistics.

Modern linguists who write on language change use Johnson and eighteenth-century purism, as well as the enduring popular notion that for Johnson linguistic change is corruption or decay, as foils against which they can describe modern understandings of language change and modern approaches to language study. In her account of language change, Jean Aitchison places Johnson in the contexts of a "puristic movement at its height" in the eighteenth century, noting Johnson's statement in the *Dictionary*'s Preface that "Tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration," and his "urging that 'we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure.'"[315] April McMahon cites Johnson's comment on degenerating tongues as part of a "long and continuing tradition which sees linguistic change as an essentially retrograde process which should, if possible, be stopped. . . . This view is part and parcel of human nostalgia, the belief in a Golden Age which is always just beyond human memory, and manifests itself in a view that current languages and states of languages are profoundly degenerate compared with what went before."[316] Johnson's attitudes here are offered in order to represent nostalgic, naïve views on language change.

By using foils such as Johnson or the beliefs about language change he represents, the historical linguist can disabuse entrants to the field of "the popular attitude towards language change," whereby "changes are often seen as corruption, decay, degeneration, deterioration, as due to laziness or slovenliness, as a threat to education, morality, and even to national security."[317] For modern practitioners of historical linguistics, one can

[315] Jean Aitchison, *Language Change: Progress or Decay?*, 8.
[316] April M. S. McMahon, *Understanding Language Change.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 323.
[317] Lyle Cambell, *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 7.

truly begin linguistic study only after realizing that "language change is not a completely random, unprincipled deviation from a state of pristine perfection, but proceeds in large measure in a remarkably regular and systematic fashion, without any profound effects on our ability to communicate."[318] Thus Johnson's use of corruption to understand language change seems to situate Johnson as a pre-linguistic thinker.

Given these contexts within which Johnson's use of corruption is discussed, it is not surprising that important studies of the *Dictionary* portray Johnson's use of the term "corruption" within the *Dictionary* as a clear case of eighteenth-century prescriptivism. Harold B. Allen, in his dissertation on Johnson's "linguistic judgments" in the *Dictionary*, includes "corrupt, v.," "corrupt, a.," "corruptly," and "corruption" among a list of "the epithets and terms of approval or disapproval with which Johnson indicated his attitude toward words," including "low," "barbarous," "cant," among others.[319] Daisuke Nagashima, in *Johnson the Philologist*, reproduces and accepts Allen's list as "a table of Johnson's discriminatory labels."[320] "What Johnson meant by these terms," Allen argues, "can perhaps best be seen by recourse to his own definitions of them, with the aid of the corresponding definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary."[321] Allen applies this same principle in a much later summary of the findings and conclusions of his dissertation, noting, "Ninety-four words are 'corrupt', 'corrupted', 'corruptions', or 'corruptly used.' *Extremest* is 'corrupted' by the redundant expression of the superlative with *–est*. *Draft* is 'corrupt' for 'draught'. To Johnson *corrupt* meant 'Vitious; tainted

[318] Hans Henrich Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 2nd revised and updated edition. (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 2.
[319] Harold Byron Allen, "Samuel Johnson and the Authoritarian Principle," 164; 172-73.
[320] Daisuke Nagashima, *Johnson the Philologist*, 128-29.
[321] Allen, "Samuel Johnson and the Authoritarian Principle," 173.

with wickedness; without integrity'."[322] But Allen's account of Johnson's use of "corruption" contains two serious flaws. First, it significantly undercounts occurrences of "corruption" and its related forms in the *Dictionary*. Computer technology unavailable to Allen, in the form of a searchable CD-ROM edition of the *Dictionary*, now allows us to locate via keyword searches every occurrence of "corruption" as it appears in the *Dictionary* in its various forms.[323] If one discounts uses of the term in the wording of definitions or occurrences in illustrative quotations, the1773 *Dictionary* contains 395 occurrences of "corruption" in its various forms, including 20 occurrences new to that edition. Second, Allen assumes that all occurrences of "corruption" and its related forms are equal in terms of meaning and function. By choosing one of many significations to stand in for every use of every form of "corrupt," "corruption," "corruptly," Allen performs an artificial act of semantic narrowing, restricting their possible range of meanings, and in doing so he disregards the contexts in which Johnson used these terms. In effect, every instance of "corruption" as Allen presents it provides more evidence for his view that Johnson was a man whose "mental make-up was that of the dictator."[324]

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[322] Harold B. Allen, "Samuel Johnson: Originator of Usage Labels," *Linguistic and Literary Studies In Honor of Archibald A. Hill*, Jazayery, Mohammad Ali, Edgar C. Polomé, Werner Winter, eds. (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 199.

[323] I searched the CD-ROM *Dictionary*, which contains the text of both the first (1755) and fourth (1773) editions, by asking it to find all instances of "corrupt*", which yields every instance of a word beginning with the string "corrupt" (corrupts, corrupted, corrupting, corruptly, and so on), including "corrupt" itself. Performing this search yields matches that occur anywhere in the *Dictionary*—not just among etymologies or usage notes, but among definitions and illustrative quotations as well. For my particular purpose of finding forms of "corruption" among Johnson's *metatextual* comments, this search overgenerated results, but those results yield important uses of "corruption" which contribute to our understanding of the rich and varied contexts informing Johnson's understanding of, and uses of, the term. Anne McDermott, editor of the CD-ROM, describes ways to search the CD-ROM in the handbook accompanying the disc. See Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM: The First and Fourth Editions*, Anne McDermott, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 31-32.

[324] Allen, "Samuel Johnson and the Authoritarian Principle," 146.

In fact, Johnson's use of "corruption" in the *Dictionary* is more nuanced and polysemous than any study, or even Johnson's writing in the Preface, suggests. Given Johnson's various comments in the Preface on "corruption" and "depravation" in both oral and written language, it is valuable to discover that his use of the term "corruption" in the *Dictionary* reveals him employing that term not simply as a prescriptive note to bemoan, guide, or condemn usage as is generally believed, but also as an analytic term to describe language change. Johnson describes all sublunary change within a larger postlapsarian framework that entails corruption, but this does not preclude him from, at the same time, describing change in a scientific way—or in Johnson's case, a linguistic way. So even as Johnson uses "corruption" in its still well-known, morally laden sense, he also employs the term in a more neutral, descriptive, now obsolete sense, once used by natural philosophers but generally overlooked by modern students of the *Dictionary*. We will not discover the nuance in Johnson's use of "corruption" merely by consulting his definition of the term or corresponding definitions in the O.E.D., as Allen suggests. Rather, the subtle distinctions in Johnson's use of "corruption" will best be seen in context, in observing his actual use of the term as he applies it along with several other evaluative and descriptive terms within what I call the *metatextual* elements of the *Dictionary*.

As I have explained in my general introduction, "corruption," for Johnson, is a term of conjecture and linguistic analysis as much as it is a moral term. In fact, many of Johnson's comments on "corruption" are not dogmatic pronouncements but tentative conjectures in which proposed corruptions are hypothesized assessments of the linguistic

and textual evidence available. This use of "corruption" as a heuristic term is not new or especially distinctive to Johnson, but draws on the traditions of textual criticism, etymology, and antiquarian research that informed the eighteenth-century practice of philology. In positing corruptions, Johnson not only draws on these traditions, but also draws on his own observations and developing assumptions about what kinds of "corruptions" are plausible or likely. These include not only his several observations on changes in meaning, which have been widely discussed, but observations on the kinds of phonetic changes Johnson notes when deriving the French *jour* from the Latin *dies*. In positing plausible corruptions, Johnson begins to synthesize the thousands of examples of language changes he observes from etymon to headword, from cognate to cognate, from entry to entry, from writer to writer, from the west midlands of Lichfield to urban center of London. In positing corruptions Johnson also may be particularly inspired by his reading of the phonetic work of William Holder, whose *Elements of Speech* (1614) is quoted throughout the *Dictionary*.

Ironically, Johnson's very attention to corruptions for the sake of censoring them provides him an informal corpus of data from which to form notions about how language actually changes. In paying attention to "corruptions," seen in the long view of history across time and from language to language, Johnson employs his assumptions about what kinds of censurable linguistic tendencies occur frequently in order to hypothesize plausible language changes. Johnson the censor becomes Johnson the philologist. Yet this is not to repeat the simple trajectory from dedicated prescriptivist to qualified descriptivist that we find in many accounts and thumbnail sketches of the *Dictionary*.

Both Johnson's belief in the value of what he regarded as carefully cultivated English and his deep interest in philological questions and pursuits precede and follow his work on the *Dictionary*.

The copresence of prescription and description in Johnson's uses of "corruption" parallels the ambivalence Johnson expressed about language change in the Preface. In Johnson's varied uses of "corruption" in the *Dictionary* we find a kind of semantic aporia, a tension in his uses of the term that captures both his prescriptive and descriptive tendencies. While his Preface portrays living language as a chaos impossible to describe, Johnson's descriptions of individual language changes in the *Dictionary*, when seen in context with one another, show him using the concept of corruption to describe language change as a process that involves clear, describable, intermediate steps. The usual reading of "corruption" in Johnson's writings on language finds only lament and condemnation, the voice of the prescriptivist, yet Johnson's use of "corruption" also reveals his efforts to describe language as it exists, even when he is not happy about it.

II. Johnson's Uses of the Term "Corruption"

Johnson's first definition of *corruption*, "The principle by which bodies tend to the separation of their parts," suggests a general sense of corruption not as a moral or behavioral state of being, but as an inevitable natural law governing change in everything under the sun—from changes in speech to the rotting of apples. We find this sense of "corruption" throughout the *Dictionary*. Under the entry for *reciprocal*, Francis Bacon writes, "Corruption is reciprocal to generation; and they two are as nature's two boundaries, and guides to life and death." Under the entry for *dissolubility*, Matthew Hale

writes, "Bodies seem to have an intrinsick principle of alteration, or corruption, from the dissolubility of their parts, and the coalition of several particles endued with contrary and destructive qualities each to other."[325] Things *corruptible*, as defined by the *Dictionary*, include those things which are "[s]usceptible of destruction by natural decay, or without violence" (such as bread, flesh, bone) as well as those things that are "susceptible of external depravation; possible to be tainted or vitiated" (blood, air).[326] Other reference works from the period reflect this now obsolete "philosophical" sense of corruption. The definition of *corruption* in the modest Dyche-Pardon dictionary of 1740 displays the popular, philosophical, and legal senses of *corruption* as follows:

> CORRUPTION (S.) a spoiling, abusing, perverting. In *Philosophy*, it is the mutation, destruction, or change of its form or proper mode of existence, that any natural body undergoes by time and other accidents. In *Law*, it is the disgrace, &c. that a man brings upon his family by treason or felony.[327]

And *corruptibility* is "an aptness, suitableness, fitness, or capacity of being debased, spoiled, bribed, or putrified."[328] Eighteenth-century encyclopedist Ephraim Chambers, in his *Cyclopædia*'s division of knowledge, places corruption under the heading of knowledge "NATURAL & SCIENTIFICAL," and the further subheading of "PHYSICS,

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[325] 1755 has *coadlition* for *coalition*.
[326] The quotes here come from Johnson's definition of the adjective *corruptible*; the examples in parentheses don't come from this definition, but represent things described by author's of illustrative quotations as undergoing corruption at some time or other; see, for example, the definition of *pestilent*, adj. 2, for an instance of bread; *ruddiness*, n.s., for an example of flesh; *putrefactive*, adj., for bone; *purity*, n.s. 1, for blood; and *permittance*, n.s., for air. The wording of the definitions constitutes senses 1 and 2, respectively, from the entry for *corruptible* in the revised 4th edition of 1773. Johnson's definition of sense 2 in the 1st edition reads, "Susceptible of corruption; possible to be tainted or vitiated," which Johnson seems to have revised to avoid circularity in his definition. All subsequent quotations from the *Dictionary* come from the revised folio 4th edition of 1773 unless otherwise noted and are checked against the 1755 first edition.
[327] Thomas Dyche and William Pardon, *A New General English Dictionary* (Hildesham & New York: Georg Olms Verlag 1972 [1740]), sig. Zv.
[328] Dyche and Pardon, *A New General English Dictionary*, sig. Zv.

or the Doctrine of CAUSES; as…Modifications or Changes, as *Alteration*, *Corruption*, *Putrefaction*, *Generation*, *Degeneration*, *Transmutation*, &c."[329] Chambers both demonstrates the breadth of circumstances for which one might use the term *corruption* and distinguishes *corruption* from both *generation* and *alteration*. Under the entry for *corruption*, Chambers writes:

> CORRUPTION, the Extinction of any Thing; or the Action whereby it ceases to be what it was.
>
> Thus, Wood is said to be *corrupted*, when we don't see it remain Wood any longer, but find Fire in its stead. And thus the Egg is *corrupted*, when it ceases to be an Egg, and we find a Chicken in its room.
>
> Hence that Axiom in Philosophy, *The Corruption of one thing is the Generation of another*.
>
> *Corruption*, in effect, differs from Generation, as two Contraries differ from each other. See GENERATION.
>
> It differs from *Alteration* as the Less from a Greater, or a Part from the Whole; a Thing being said to be *alter'd*, when it is not so far chang'd but may be known, and still keeps its old Name; both which it loses by *Corruption*. See ALTERATION.
>
> But, as in Generation, nothing of Matter is produced that did not before exist; so in *Corruption*, nothing more is lost, than that particular Modification which was its Form, and made it to be of such a Species. See FORM.[330]

While the processes of semantic narrowing have, for the most part, made these senses of corruption obsolete, they were pervasive in the eighteenth-century, and both their prevalence and breadth of application suggest that by using what seems to be such a morally laden term of disapproval in a descriptive, analytical context, Johnson is participating in a tradition of discourse on corruption that can be scientific in local application, or descriptive in focus, even when its assumptions and vocabulary are grounded in Christian cosmology.

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[329] Ephraim Chambers, "Preface," *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), iii, sig. a2r.
[330] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia*, 332, sig. Qqqq2v.

Boswell's account of Johnson's derivation of *jour*, as I suggest in the introduction, gives us a good idea of the way Johnson employs assumptions about how language is corrupted to describe language changes as a series of clear, intermediate steps. Analogues to Johnson's derivation of *jour* are scattered throughout the *Dictionary*, and they show how Johnson uses corruption as an analytic term to describe sound changes. In Johnson's revision to the entry for *owler*, for instance, he supplements his original etymological conjecture, based on semantic change, with a derivation which, like the derivation of *jour*, proposes a series of "intermediate steps" by which sound changes proceed. The underlined material was added to Johnson's 1773 revision.[331]

> O'WLER. n.s. One who carries contraband goods: <u>in the legal sense, one that carries out wool illicitely</u>. Perhaps from the necessity of carrying on an illicit trade by night: <u>but rather, I believe, a corruption of *wooller*, by a colloquial neglect of the *w*, such as is often observed in *woman*, and by which *goodwife* is changed to *goody*. *Wooler*, *ooller*, *owler*</u>.
>
> By running goods, these graceless *owlers* gain. *Swift*.
>
> We understand by some *owlers*, old people die in France. *Tatler, ~~No. 56~~*.

As is the case with the derivation of *jour*, Johnson employs assumptions both about how language changes ("colloquial neglect") and what particular changes are likely ("neglect of the *w*"), based on what "is often observed" in the language. While Johnson never approves of "colloquial neglect," his point here is not to be prescribing usage, but to justify his derivation with arguments based on what he claims to be a common sound and spelling change. In addition to his observations on *woman* and *goody* (which he describes under *goody*, n.s. as "corrupted from *good wife*"), Johnson notes similar instances of '*w*-

[331] In my presentation of entries from the *Dictionary*, which come from the revised 4th edition of 1773, I indicate revisions to the first edition by underlining material added to the text, and use strikethroughs to indicate deletions. Whenever revisions are too complex to present in this way, I present them in my footnotes or detail them in the body of the paper.

neglect' under *boson* ("corrupted from *boatswain*"), *cockswain* ("Corruptly COXON"), *gunnel* ("corrupted for *gunwale*"), and *hussy* ("corrupted from *housewife*"). To simply read Johnson's comment here on "corruption" as another prescriptive usage note is to ignore an important aspect of Johnson's use of the term. There is no indication that Johnson is suggesting a preference here for the form *wooler*, nor does there exist an entry for *wooler* in the *Dictionary* (or the OED). In Johnson's revised analysis, corruption is both a proposed fact of the word's history and a reoccurring observable process in language change.

Similarly, Johnson uses "corruption" as an analytical tool when revising his derivation of *bumbailiff*. In the first edition the derivation between the brackets simply reads, "From *bum* and *bailiff*," interpreting the word as a compound of *bailiff* and *bum*, which itself is defined thus,

> BUM.n.s. [*bomme*, Dutch.]
> 1. The buttocks; the part on which we sit.[332]
> 2. It is used, in composition, for any thing mean or low, as *bumbailiff*.

But in the fourth edition, Johnson replaces his derivation with a new one and removes the second sense of *bum*. The new derivation proposes a process of "gradual" corruption.

> BUMBAILIFF. n.s. [<u>This is a corruption of *bound* bailiff, pronounced by gradual corruption, *boun*, *bun*, *bum*, bailiff</u>.] A bailiff of the meanest kind; one that is employed in arrests.
>
> > Go, Sir Andrew, scout me for him at the corner of the orchard, like a *bumbailiff*. *Shakespeare*. ~~*Twelfth Night.*~~

The new derivation may be influenced by legal commentator William Blackstone, who in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69) wrote that because "special bailiffs"

[332] For brevity's sake, I've removed the quotations used to illustrate sense 1. Johnson includes no quotes to illustrate sense 2.

were employed by the sheriff, who was "answerable" for any misdemeanors on their part, these bailiffs "are therefore usually bound in a bond for the due execution of their office, and thence are called bound-bailiffs; which the common people have corrupted into a much more homely appellation."[333] If Blackstone explains the meaning of "bound bailiff" where Johnson does not, Johnson presents the gradual, intermediate steps that led Blackstone's "common people" to their "much more homely appellation." After second-guessing his original etymology, which may have made sense given the Shakespeare illustration and Johnson's familiarity with *bum* "in composition," Johnson turns to corruption, or more precisely "gradual corruption," in order to explain Blackstone's corruption. Johnson does not rely here on a Lockean association of ideas to explain the change but proposes sound changes: *-nd* to *-n*, *-ou- to -u-*, *-n* to *-m*. In the cases of *bumbailiff* and *owler*, the OED disagrees with Johnson. And in both cases, Johnson's etymology requires more steps than his previous etymology. But what is significant for our purposes is his attempt to deduce a chain of sound changes and his analytical use of corruption to explain the change.

Johnson employs the concept of "gradual corruption" elsewhere in the *Dictionary*, especially when the etymology of a word is unclear or in Johnson's view unsatisfactory, sometimes and sometimes not identifying "intermediate steps" by which he views a word to change in form. For example, Johnson supplements his etymology for *gun* in the revised edition with a conjectural etymology grounded in the notion of "gradual corruption":

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[333] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. 4 vols. A Facsimile of the First Edition of 1765-1769 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), I, 334.

> GUN. n.s. [Of this word there is no satisfactory etymology. Mr. *Lye* observes that *gun* in Iceland signifies *battle*; but when *guns* came into use we had no commerce with Iceland. May not *gun* come by gradual corruption from *canne*, *ganne*, *gunne*? *Canne* is the original of *cannon*.] . . . .

Here again Johnson uses "corruption" as an analytic tool rather than a prescriptive usage label. Lacking any notion of regular vowel change, Johnson proposes a "gradual corruption" that relies partly on the semantic similarities between *gun*, *cannon*, and *canne* (or *canna*, as Johnson lists this etymon under the entry for *cannon*):

> CA'NNON.n.s. [*cannon*, Fr. from *canna*, Lat. a pipe, meaning a large tube.]
> 1. A great gun for battery.
> 2. A gun larger than can be managed by the hand. They are of so many sizes, that they decrease in the bore from a ball of forty-eight pounds to a ball of five ounces.[334]

But as is the case with *bumbailiff* and *owler*, Johnson considers not only semantic similarities but also well known observations about sound correspondences and recurring sound changes in English, such as the similarities between sounds represented by the letters *c* and *g* and the common observation that final *e* becomes silent or disappears in English. Under the entry for the letter *e* Johnson posits the reasons for the loss of final *e* under the entry for the letter *e*. In Johnson's account of final *e*-loss, the *e* first becomes "soft," then "mute or vocal," depending on the circumstances, and then "universally silent." Johnson writes, "Anciently almost every word ended with *e*; as for *can*, *canne*; for *year*, *yeare*; for *great*, *greate*; for *need*, *neede*; for *flock*, *flocke*. It is probable that this *e* final had at first a soft sound, like the female *e* of the French; and that afterwards it was in poetry either mute or vocal, as the verse required, 'till at last it became universally silent."

[334] I have removed quotes from Shakespeare, Clarendon, and Wilkins.

In entries other than the one for *gun* Johnson relies on a presumed correspondence between *c* (or *ck*) and *g* (or *gg*). For instance, the verb *haggle* is "corrupted from *hackle* or *hack*." The etymology of *Muggy* and its variant *muggish* is changed from "a cant word" in the first edition to "corrupted from *mucky* for *damp*" in the revised fourth edition. Under the entry for *moky* Johnson writes, "It seems a corruption of *murky*. In some places they call it *muggy*."[335] And in presenting evidence for the etymology of *huggermugger* Johnson presumes correspondences among *g*, *gg*, *ck*, and *k*:

> HU'GGERMUGGER. n.s. [corrupted perhaps from *hug er morcker*, or hug in the dark. *Morcker* in Danish is darkness, whence our *murky*. It is written by Sir *Thomas More*, *hoker moker*. *Hoker*, in *Chaucer*, is *peevish*, *crossgrained*, of which *moker* may be only a ludicrous reduplication. *Hooke* is likewise in German *a corner*, and *moky* is in English *dark*. I know not how to determine.] Secrecy; bye-place. *Hubberd's Tale*, *Hudibras~~. p. i.~~*, *L'Estrange~~'s Fables~~.*

In all of these entries Johnson is drawing on the notion of corruption as one of the analytical tools at his disposal when deriving a word's etymology, as he does in the etymology for *huggermugger*, where Johnson mentions corruption not to recommend or admonish against usage but rather to offer a conjecture about *huggermugger*'s derivation.

Johnson's derivation of *jour* does not mention corruption, but his seeming confidence in relating the "intermediate steps" from *dies* to *jour* must be related to his numerous observations on corruptions in English, and his increasingly confident intuitions about them. Even when Johnson does not use the word "corruption" to describe change, he offers similar conjectures elsewhere in the *Dictionary*. In the etymology for

[335] 1755: "It seems a corruption of murky: and in some places they call it muggy, dusky." No italics in 1755.

the verb *to dribble*, for instance, Johnson proposes a derivation like the ones he gives for *gun*, *bumbailiff*, and *wooler*.

> To DRI'BBLE.v.n. [This word seems to have come from *drop* by successive alterations, such as are usual in living languages. *Drop*, *drip*, *dripple*, *dribble*, from thence *drivel* and *driveler*. *Drip* may indeed be the original word, from the Danish *drypp*.]

While Johnson uses the term "successive alterations," a term less provocative to modern readers than "gradual corruptions," the case of *dribble* is not strikingly different from that of words he derives elsewhere as corruptions. Johnson's conjecture about the etymological relationship among *drip*, *dribble*, and *drivel* relies not only on the semantic connections between these words but also on both the implied affinity between *b* and other "labials" as well as observations about how *b*, *p*, and *v* are "confounded" with one another or used "indifferently." In his entry for the letter B Johnson notes that it has "a near affinity with the other labial letters, and is confounded by the Germans with *P*, and by the Gascons with *V*; from which an epigrammatist remarks, that *bibere* and *vivere* are in Gascony the same. The Spaniards, in most words, use *B* or *V* indifferently." Johnson relies on such affinities even when he does not label them as alterations or corruptions, as in the case of his etymology for the verb *to drivel*.

> To DRI'VEL. v.n. [from *drip*, *dripple*, *dribble*, drivel.]

The etymology Johnson provides for *to drivel* seems to represent what he explicitly labels elsewhere a corruption, and like the other examples we have seen, the "original" of the corrupted form is not necessarily recommended in favor of the corrupted form; the comment on corruption serves not so much to condemn current usage as to clarify the history of the word.

Johnson's comments on corruption, like those of other etymologists before him, are often conjectures rather than strictures. Under the entry for *behalf*, Johnson proposes an alternative to Skinner's etymology, drawing on his assumptions and observations about how words are corrupted:

> BEHALF.n.s.[This word *Skinner* derives from *half*, and interprets it, *for my half*; as, *for my part*. It seems to me rather corrupted from *behoof*, profit; the pronunciation degenerating easily to *behafe*; which, in imitation of other words so sounded, was written, by those who knew not the etymology, *behalf*.] . . .

Just as Johnson's derivation of of *jour* depends on his assumptions about what letters might be "easily confounded," his alternative to Skinner's etymology depends as well on assumptions about what forms might "degenerat[e] easily" into others, as well as assumptions about how both ignorance of etymology and the inclination to spelling "imitation" or analogy alters language.

Under the entry for *stocking* we see Johnson similarly using the concept of corruption not so much to prescribe against usage but to offer a plausibly reasoned conjecture on etymology:

> STO'CKING. n.s. [The original word seems to be *stock*, whence *stocks*, a prison for the legs. *Stock*, in the old language, made the plural *stocken*, which was used for a pair of *stocks* or covers for the legs. *Stocken* was in time taken for a singular, and pronounced *stocking*. The like corruption has happened to *chick*, *chicken*, *chickens*.] The covering of the leg.[336]

Even if Johnson regrets such "like corruption[s]" as those presumably operating on *stock* and *chick*, Johnson is not recommending a return to the 'uncorrupted' form of *stock*; nor is he prescribing against the use of *stockings* or *chickens*. Johnson's derivation of *stocking* shows him again using "corruption" as an analytic term. Johnson implicitly

[336] Many quotes follow.

draws on the concept of corruption in his revisions of the entries for *chick*/*chicken* and *mittens*, even though he does not use the term "corruption." In the revised entry for *chick*/*chicken*, Johnson adds, "*Chicken* is, I believe, the old plural of *chick*, though now used as a singular noun." And in the entry for *mittens*, Johnson adds, "It is said that *mit* is the original word; whence *mitten*, the plural, and afterwards *mittens*, as in *chicken*." In both the case of *chick*/*chicken* and *mitten*, Johnson's comments supplement his original etymologies, [*cicen*, Sax. *kiecken*, Dutch.] and [*mitaine*, French.]. In the entries for *chicken*, *mitten*, and *stocking*, we see Johnson observing recurring processes of language change, and we see Johnson using observations made in one entry to analyze or reanalyze data in another entry. The "corruptions" responsible for the word *chickens* (*chick*, *chicken*, *chickens*), like the "successive alterations" by means of which *drop* becomes *dribble*, are "usual in living languages." As such, they become facts for Johnson to reckon with, and Johnson often uses "corruption" both as a term to describe those facts, and as a concept to analyze the data he encounters in his entries.

* * * * * *

In addition to the discourses of natural and moral philosophy, Johnson's vocabulary of "corruption" and his practice of using corruption as an analytic tool draws on three traditions of philological discourse—textual criticism, etymology, and antiquarian research. Before working on the *Dictionary*, Johnson used "corruption" as an analytic tool in his 1745 *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, a

sample of Johnson's critical abilities intended to initiate a new edition of Shakespeare. Johnson proposes an alteration to the following text,[337]

> MACBETH. The service, and the loyalty I owe,
> In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
> Is to receive our duties, and our duties
> Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
> Which do but what they should, in doing *every thing*
> *Safe tow'rds your love and honour*.

Having noted that this last line is "unintelligible" Johnson is not satisfied with the "emendation…which Mr. Warburton, and Mr. Theobald have admitted as the true reading":

> Which do but what they should, in doing every thing
> *Fiefs* to your love and honour.

Johnson proposes "a bolder change, perhaps with no better success":

> ---Our duties
> Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
> Which do but what they should, in doing *nothing*
> *Save* tow'rds your love and honour.

Substituting the adverbial form of *save*, meaning "except," for *safe*, Johnson takes the passage to mean that we "do but perform our duty when we contract all our views to your service, when we act with 'no other' principle than regard to 'your love and honour.'" Johnson's emendation here depends on the assumption that the text was probably

> first corrupted by writing "safe" for "save," and the lines then stood thus,
> ---Doing nothing
> Safe tow'rd your love and honour.
> Which the next transcriber observing to be wrong, and yet not being able to discover the real fault, altered to the present reading.

[337] All passages from the *Miscellaneous Observations* are quoted from *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, vol. VII of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 3-45.

For Johnson the various intermediaries who came between Shakespeare's presumptive ideal, authorized text and the eighteenth-century reader often corrupted the texts of Shakespeare. Johnson later declared, "The business of him that republishes an ancient book is, to correct what is corrupt, and to explain what is obscure."[338] The texts of Shakespeare were, in Johnson's view, particularly subject to alteration, as they were

> copied for the actors, and multiplied by transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player; …printed at last without the concurrence of the authour, without the consent of the proprietor, from compilations made by chance or stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre: and thus thrust into the world surreptitiously and hastily, they suffered another depravation from the ignorance and negligence of the printers, as every man who knows the state of the press in that age will readily conceive.[339]

The "task of critical sagacity" requires that the editor of an old text be "versed in the writings of that age, and particularly studious of his authour's diction." "There is danger," Johnson writes, "lest peculiarities should be mistaken for corruptions, and passages rejected as unintelligible, which a narrow mind happens not to understand." Corruption was one of the causal explanations available to the textual critic in cases where "all the books are evidently vitiated, and collation can give no assistance."[340] In glossing an unintelligible or anomalous word or passage Johnson, like textual editors before him, attributes certain changes in Shakespeare's texts to corruption, but corruption was one of several ways to account for an anomaly or problematic passage in a text.

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[338] *Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, 1756, in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, vol. VII of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 51. All subsequent citations from the *Proposals* refer to this edition.
[339] *Proposals for Printing Shakespeare*, 52.
[340] *Proposals for Printing Shakespeare*, 56, 55.

In identifying and rectifying corruptions in the text, the textual editor would contribute to the history and accurate use of the language, because "the history of our language, and the true force of our words, can only be preserved by keeping the text of authors free from adulteration."[341] The close relationship between Johnson's work as a lexicographer and his work as a textual critic has long been acknowledged, and is clear in his use of "corruption" in the entry for *to begirt*:

> To BEGI'RT. v.a. [This is, I think, only a corruption of *begird*; perhaps by the printer.] To begird. See BEGIRD.
>
> And, Lentulus, *begirt* you Pompey's house,
> To seize his sons alive; for they are they
> Must make our peace with him. *Ben. Johnson~~'s Catiline~~*.[342]

While Johnson includes the entry for *to begirt*, the well attested form of *begird* in the imperative mood leads Johnson to expect that this instance of *begirt* may only be another instance of "the ignorance and negligence of the printers." In the context of a critical edition of Ben Johnson's work, this note on "corruption" serves primarily as an "emendatory" note, the kind "by which depravations [of the text] are corrected."[343] In the context of a dictionary meant to standardize the language, this conjectural tone of the note, signaled by the phrase "I think," does not overpower the note's implicit normative message: the reader should, at the very least, be wary of using *begirt* in this way. Johnson's note here tries to keep the text of Johnson's *Catiline*, and by implication the

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[341] "Preface to Shakespeare (1765)," in Yale *Works*, VII, 105. In the context of Biblical textual criticsim, the correction of corruptions could serve the pious purpose of rectifying seeming absurdities. An April 1753 summary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of Benjamin Kennicott's Hebrew Old Testament writes that the "author of this book is of the opinion, that the printed Hebrew Text is *in many places corrupted*; and that many sentences, which at present appear unintelligible, absurd or contradictory, owe these blemishes to the mistakes of the *Jewish* transcribers, and to the bad MSS made choice of for printing the Hebrew Bibles." *The Gentleman's Magazine* 23 (April 1753), 155. Emphasis in original.

[342] Ben Jonson is spelled *Ben Johnson* in the *Dictionary*.

[343] "Preface to Shakespeare, 1765," in Yale *Works*, VII, 102.

language, "free from adulteration." Yet the presence of the phrase "I think" suggests that the reader is left to judge.

Johnson's frequent use of "corruption" as a conjectural term also participates in the etymological tradition. Like textual critics, etymologists examining language change employed corruption as one of several causal explanations available to them, as is evident in cases where Johnson presents conflicting beliefs about a word's derivation and where Johnson disagrees with or questions an etymology, as we have seen in the cases of *gun* and *behalf*, and in the case of *to prowl*.

> To PROWL. v.a. [Of this word the etymology is doubtful: the old dictionaries write *prole*, which the dreamer *Casaubon* derives from προαλης[344], ready, quick. *Skinner*, a far more judicious etymologist, deduces it from *proieler*, a diminutive formed by himself from *proier*, to prey, Fr. perhaps it may be formed, by accidental corruption, from *patrol*.]

In other cases, Johnson offers corruption as an alternative explanation of a word's derivation when he can find no etymon or cognate, as in the entries for *to cherup*, *to fillip*, *hist*, *callipers*, *trinket*, *oakum*, and *to pore*:

> To CHE'RUP. v.n. [from *cheer*; perhaps from *cheer up*; corrupted to *cherip*.] To chirp; to use a cheerful voice.
>
> The birds
> Frame to thy song their cheerful *cheriping*;
> Or hold their peace for shame of thy sweet lays. *Spens<u>er</u>~~. Past~~*.

> To FI'LLIP. v.a. [A word, says *Skinner*, formed from the sound. This resemblance I am not able to discover, and therefore am inclined to imagine it corrupted from *fill up*, by some combination of ideas which cannot be recovered.] To strike with the nail of the finger by a sudden spring or motion. *Shak. Hen. IV.*; *Shakes. Coriol.*; *Bacon's Natural History~~, No. 183~~.*

> HIST. interj.[Of this word I know not the original: probably it may be a corruption of *hush*, *hush it*, *husht*, *hist*.] An exclamation commanding silence.

[344] The eta (η) in the *Dictionary* is marked with a grave accent.

> CA'LLIPERS. n.s. [Of this word I know not the etymology, nor does any thing more probable occur, than that, perhaps, the word is corrupted from *clippers*, instruments with which any thing is *clipped*, inclosed or embraced.] Compasses with bowed shanks. *Moxon's Mechanical Exercises*.
>
> TRI'NKET.n.s. [This *Skinner* derives somewhat harshly from *trinquet*, Fr. *trinchetto*, Ital. *a topsail*. I rather imagine it corrupted from *tricket*, some petty finery or decoration.] 1. Toys; ornaments of dress; superfluities of decoration. <several quotes> 2. Things of no great value; tackle; tools. *Tuss*.; *L'Estr*.[345]
>
> OAKUM. n.s. [A word probably formed by some corruption.] Cords untwisted and reduced to hemp, with which, mingled with pitch, leaks are stopped. *Raleigh*.; *Dryden*.
>
> To PORE. v.n. [. . . I imagine *pore* to come by corruption from some English word.] To look with great intenseness and care; to examine with great attention. <many quotes> . . .

Long before Johnson, etymologists turned to corruption as an explanation for a word's origin or history, especially where textual evidence was inconclusive or unavailable. In the case of the interjection *halloo*, whose "original…is controverted," all of the derivations are presented as some sort of corruption: "some imagine it corrupted from *a lui*, to him! others from *allons*, let us go! and *Skinner* from *haller*, to draw.]." Sometimes Johnson disagrees with earlier proposed corruptions, as in the etymologies for *booby*, *to cater*, *chime*, *pentice*, *scroll*, and *sillabub*.

> BO'OBY. n.s. [A word of no certain etymology; *Henshaw* thinks it a corruption of *bull-beef* ridiculously; *Skinner* imagines it to be derived from *bobo*, foolish, Span. *Junius* finds *bowbard* to be an old Scottish word for a *coward*, a *contemptible fellow*; from which he naturally deduces *booby*; but the original of *bowbard* is not known.] A dull, heavy, stupid fellow; a lubber.
> *Prior*.; *King*.
>
> CATES. n.s. [of uncertain etymology; *Skinner* imagines it may be corrupted from *delicate*; which is not likely, because *Junius* observes, that the Dutch have *kater*

[345] Johnson includes no entry for *tricket*.

in the same sense with our *cater*.[346] It has no singular.] Viands; food; dish of meat; generally employed to signify nice and luxurious food. ***Ben. Johnson***.; *Raleigh*.; *Par. Lost, ~~b. ii~~*.; *Philips*.; *Arbuthnot*.

CHIME. n.s. [The original of this word is doubtful. *Junius* and *Minshew* suppose it corrupted from *cimbal*; *Skinner* from *gamme*, or *gamut*; *Henshaw* from *chiamare*, to *call*, because the *chime* calls to church. Perhaps it is only softened from *chirme*, or *churme*, an old word for the sound of many voices, or instruments making a noise together.] . . . .

PE'NTICE. n.s. [*appentir*, French; *pendice*, Italian. It is commonly supposed a corruption of *penthouse*; but perhaps *pentice* is the true word.] A sloping roof.

> Climes that fear the falling and lying of much snow, ought to provide more inclining *pentices*. *Wotton*.

SCROLL. n.s. [Supposed by *Minshew* to be corrupted from *roll*; by *Skinner* derived from an *escrouelle* given by the heralds: whence parchment, wrapped up into a resembling form, has the same name. It may be observed, that a gaoler's list of prisoners is *escrou*.] A writing wrapped up. <several quotes>

SI'LLABUB. n.s. [This word has exercised the etymologists. *Minshew* thinks it corrupted from *swillingbubbles*. *Junius* omits it. *Henshaw*, whom *Skinner* follows, deduces it from the Dutch *sulle*, a pipe, and *buyck*, a paunch; because *sillabubs* are commonly drunk through a spout, out of a jug with a large belly. It seems more probably derived from *esil*, in old English *vinegar, esil a bouc*, *vinegar for the mouth*, vinegar made pleasant.] Curds made by milking upon vinegar. *Wotton*.; *King*.

Unlike the note on "corruption" in the entry for *to begirt*, which implicitly serves to prescribe the entry word, these notes on "corruption" do not prescribe against the entry words to which they refer. These notes are primarily conjectural, not condemnatory, in nature, and in this kind of context, the term "corruption" is part of the etymologist's conjectural vocabulary.

Johnson's use of "corruption" in the *Dictionary* also draws on the discourse of antiquarian fieldwork, as seen in the work of William Camden, quoted copiously

[346] See Johnson's definition for *to cater*: To CA'TER.v.n. [from *cates*.] To provide food; to buy in victuals.

throughout the *Dictionary*, as well as in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which printed old manuscripts and inscriptions as found by correspondents and encouraged readers to offer ideas about their meaning. Johnson frequently cites the work of early modern antiquary William Camden, both his *Remains* and his *Britannia*, a massive tome that comprised Camden's personal search for the physical remnants of the antiquity of "Britain."[347] Johnson's entries for "Saxon" particles and their variants, such as the entry for *al/attle/adle*, come from Camden's *Britannia*, as revised by Edmund Gibson:

> AL,ATTLE, ADLE[348] do all seem to be corruptions of the Saxon Æthel, *noble*, *famous*; as also, *Alling* and *Adling*, are corruptions of Ætheling, *noble*, *splendid*, *famous*.[349]
>
> *Al*, *Ald*, being initials, are derived from the Saxon *Eald*, *ancient*; and so, oftentimes, the initial *all*, being melted by the Normans, from the Saxon *eald*. *Gibson's Camden*.[350]

In the entry for *bedlam*, Johnson notes a corruption similar to the *æthel* to *adle* corruption ("corrupted from *Bethlehem*, the name of a religious house in London, converted afterwards into an hospital for the mad and lunatick). And the entries for *ey*/*ea*/*ee*, as well as the entry for *ley*, both constitute Camden's observations on the presumably corruptive process of "melting" in language change:

> EY.EA. EE.[351] May either come from *ig*, an island, by melting the Saxon *gh* into *y*, which is usually done; or from the Saxon *ea*, which signifies a water, river, &c. or, lastly, from *leag*, a field, by the same kind of melting. *Gibson*.

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[347] Johnson uses Edmund Gibson's revision of *Britannia*, so the work of Camden is cited variously: *Gibson's Camden* (*bert*); *Gib. Camden* (*cuth*); *Gibson* (*rad*); and *Gib.* (*ord*). It is not clear to me yet whether the many references to *Camden* in the text also refer to Gibson's *Britannia*, whether they refer to Camden's *Remains*, or both.

[348] Generally Johnson's entries from Camden do not designate a part of speech.

[349] In general I transliterate the font for "Saxon" words. Thus I print a "thorn" as "th," a "yogh" as "gh," a "winn" as "w."

[350] 1755: *Gibson's Camden* followed *splendid*, *famous*; *Idem*, *ibid.*, rather than *Gibson's Camden*, followed *eald*. The CD-ROM transcription of this entry incorrectly lists *Æwel* and *Æweling* for *Æthel* and *Ætheling*, mistaking a thorn for a winn.

> LEY.n.s. *Ley*, *lee*, *lay*, are all from the Saxon leagh, a field or pasture, by the usual melting of the letter *gh* or *g*. *Gibson's Cam*.[352]

The term "melting" here seems to refer to a recurring process of language change; the "corruption" of *æthel* to *attle* and the "melting" of *eald* to *all* are similar processes described with the vocabulary Johnson uses for language change. Johnson himself refers to "melting" in the *Dictionary*'s entry for the letter G, where he notes that before "*n,* at the end of a word, *g* is commonly melted away; as in the French, from which these words are commonly derived: thus, for *benign*, *malign*, *i*, we pronounce *benine*, *maline*, *condine*."

Johnson's metatextual commentary on "corruption" in the *Dictionary* is comparable to the kind of philological discourse Johnson may have read in *The Gentleman's Magazine* as he worked on the *Dictionary*. From mid-century and on into the latter 1700s *The Gentleman's Magazine* included engravings of inscriptions and old texts found by readers who wanted them deciphered. In order to respond to these and other questions, the magazine frequently relied on its philological correspondent, "Paul Gemsege," the anagrammatic pseudonym for Samuel Pegge, who sometimes responded to questions, and who sometimes discussed philological points on his own initiative.[353] The philogical correspondence in the *Gentleman's*, like the metatextual commentary in the *Dictionary*, applies the related interpretive techniques of the textual critic, the

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[351] Unlike the entry for AL, ATTLE, ADDLE, the entry for EY and its variants lists EY, EA, and EE vertically and to the left of a right bracket: }.
[352] In these entries I substitute "gh" for a "yogh."
[353] John Hawkins, in his eighteenth-century biography of Johnson, identifies Gemsege as Pegge. See Sir John Hawkins, Knt., *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. Bertram H. Davis (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 283 n.2.

etymologist, and the antiquarian researcher in order to interpret data from the past or data from the present whose origin is obscured by lack of historical data.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1754, Gemsege tries to account for the idiom "to turn cat i' th' pan." Its "sense is generally well enough understood," but the "reason and foundation of it is. . . greatly obscur'd by a corrupt pronunciation." Gemsege determines that *cat* "no doubt is *cate*," an "old word for *a cake* or other *aumalette*," and proceeds to lay out his evidence: "I will now produce some authorities for this word; offer a conjecture concerning its etymon; and then shew by a similar instance the facility and probability of the corruption."[354] In April of 1754, a correspondent to "Mr. Urban," the editorial persona of the *Gentleman's*, derives the phrase from the word *catipani*, referring to book from 1689 containing the derivation of English words. Another correspondent on the same page derives it from Greek.[355] After consulting "Mr *Urry*'s edition" of Chaucer and the "first of the *Harleyan* MSS" Gemsege modifies his etymology of *cate* in the next month's issue.[356] In the *Dictionary*, Johnson refers both to the *catipani* etymology—which he later adjusts to *Catapania* in his fourth edition revision—and notes that an "unknown correspondent imagines, very naturally, that it is corrupted from *Cate in the pan*."

> CAT in the pan. [imagined by some to be rightly written *Catipan*, as coming from *Catipania*[357]. An unknown correspondent imagines, very naturally, that it is corrupted from *Cate in the pan*.] There is a cunning which we, in England, call

[354] *The Gentleman's Magazine* 24 (February 1754), 66.
[355] *The Gentleman's Magazine* 24 (April 1754), 172. The first correspondent's etymology reads as follows: "CATIPAN, turn *Catipan*, from a people called *Catipani*, in *Calabria* and *Apulia*, who got an ill name by reason of their perfidy; very falsly by us called *Cat in pan*."
[356] *The Gentleman's Magazine* 24 (May 1754), 212.
[357] 1755: *Catipani*, revolted governours.

> the turning of the *cat in the pan*; which is, when that which a man says to another, he lays it as if another had said it to him. *Bacon*.

It is not certain that Paul Gemsege is Johnson's "unknown correspondent," or that Johnson's etymology of "CAT in the pan" necessarily derives from these conjectures in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; the definitions from *carry* to *dame* had already been printed for two years, according to Allen Reddick.[358]

In any case, whether or not a particular line of correspondence in the *Gentleman's Magazine* influenced a particular etymology in the *Dictionary* is not really what is interesting here. Rather, two things are notable. First, Johnson's use of "corruption" in the *Dictionary* participates in the related, often avowedly conjectural discourses of textual criticism, etymology and antiquarian research. These discourses were closely related and were considered important and interesting enough to be printed in England's most popular magazine of the mid eighteenth century. These interrelated discourses were popular enough and common enough that Johnson could have participated in them without announcing that he was doing so. Second, Johnson's comments on corruption, because they often participate in this tradition of learned correspondence, are often conjectural and dialogic. The kind of give and take in this etymological correspondence is crucial to our understanding of Johnson's metatextual commentary in the *Dictionary*. Johnson's commentary is usually considered to be aggressively, even arbitrarily, authoritative and hegemonic in manner, ethos, and function. But closer inspection of

[358] Reddick also notes that Johnson had an opportunity to review proofs and make corrections. See *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 40, 59, 81-2. One other entry in the *Dictionary*, *curmudgeon*, refers to "an unknown correspondent," and two others, *lazy* and *queer*, attribute etymological information to a "correspondent." A search of the CD-ROM turned up only these examples of such references to a "correspondent."

Johnson's commentary on "corruption"—given the contexts of textual criticism, etymology, and antiquarian research—shows his metatextual commentaries on "corruption" to be dialogic as often as they are hegemonic.

* * * * * *

Because Johnson's comments on "corruption" often participate in the closely related contexts of the editorial, etymological, and antiquarian traditions, they implicitly invite correction, emendation, elaboration. They are dialogic traditions in which arguments and hypotheses are offered with the expectation, and in Johnson's case sometimes even the hope, that readers, correspondents, or future authors will offer their own confirmations of or challenges to those hypotheses. Johnson indicates the conjectural and tentative nature of his etymologies both in the *Plan* and in the Preface, where he writes that "the etymology which I adopt is uncertain, and perhaps frequently erroneous."[359] Johnson's frequent use in his metatextual commentary of qualifiers—"may," "perhaps," "I think," "seems"—further signals the often tentative nature of his commentary.

In the etymology for *to peep*, Johnson explicitly points out the provisional nature of his commentary, offering it "till something better may be found":

> To PEEP.v.n. [This word has no etymology, except that of *Skinner*, who derives it from *ophessen*, Dutch, *to lift up*; and of *Casaubon*, who derives it from οπιπευτης,[360] *a spy*; perhaps it may come from *pip*, *pipio*, Latin, *to cry as young birds*: when the chickens first broke the shell and cried, they were said to begin to *pip* or *peep*; and the word that expressed the act of crying, was by mistake applied

[359] Preface, para. 69. In the Plan, para. 26, Johnson writes that the search for "how are primitives are to be deduced from foreign languages" will "give occasion to many curious disquisitions, and sometimes perhaps to conjectures, which, to readers unacquainted with this kind of study, cannot but appear improbable and capricious."

[360] I do not mark breathings or accents here.

> to the act of appearing that was at the same time: this is offered till something better may be found.] 1. To make the first appearance. <several quotes> 2. To look slily, closely or curiously; to look through any crevice. <several quotes>

Johnson's derivation here is offered as tentative and subject to revision, implying that "something better" indeed might be found.

> SLEEVELESS adj. 2. . . . "to this <Skinner's judgment> I cannot heartily agree, though I know not what better to suggest. Can it come from . . . ?"
> SQUIB. n.s. [*schieben*, German, to push forward. This etymology, though the best that I have found, is not very probable.]

Johnson's practice of admitting ignorance extends to his definitions and the notes to his edition of Shakespeare. "Some words there are," he writes in the Preface, "which I cannot explain, because I do not understand them."[361] With regard to his notes on Shakespeare, Johnson wrote to a friend, "[W]here I am quite at a loss, I confess my ignorance, which is seldom done by commentators."[362]

Johnson's etymologies, like the notes to his edition of Shakespeare, often broadcast their hypothetical nature, and they often present readers with reasoned alternative interpretations and the data upon which those interpretations are based. Johnson's etymologies for *pother* and its presumed variant *pudder* differ even though Johnson considers them as variants of each other, hence a "word…of double orthography." Johnson notes that the etymology is "uncertain" under *pother* and offers readers alternatives, including his own preference.

> PO'THER.n.s.[This word is of double orthography and uncertain etymology: it is sometimes written *podder*, sometimes *pudder*, and is derived by *Junius* from *foudre*, thunder, Fr. by *Skinner* from *peuteren* or *peteren*, Dutch, to shake or dig; and more probably by a second thought from *poudre*, Fr. dust.] 1. Bustle; tumult;

[361] Preface, para. 47.
[362] *Letters*, I, 159.

> flutter. A low word. <several quotes> 2. Suffocating cloud. This justifies the derivation from *poudre*. *Drayton*.

The "second thought" here is presumably Johnson's. After indicating his uncertainty, he displays alternatives followed by his own preference, in an etymology that remains tentative and subject to amendment. The presence of the etymologist is underscored by the phrase "by a second thought," and by including this phrase the etymology reads more like a record of etymological ratiocination ending on the last thought than a positive declaration. When revising the etymology in the fourth edition, Johnson tries to clarify his reasoning further by adding that the second signification "justifies the derivation from *poudre*." Johnson includes no related entry for *podder*, but under the entry for *pudder* he includes yet another etymology—suggesting that Johnson had a third thought about the derivation of this word of "double orthography":

> PU'DDER.n.s. [This is commonly written *pother*. See POTHER.This is most probably derived by Mr. *Lye* from *fudur* Islandick, a rapid motion.] A tumult; a turbulent and irregular bustle. *Shakesp. King Lear*.; *Locke*.

Here Johnson displays more confidence in the derivation from *fudur*, but his preference for Lye's derivation does not foreclose a derivation that is more plausibly reasoned and supported by more evidence. Lye's derivation is just the most probable in Johnson's estimation, given the evidence. Johnson draws not only on the material in the entries for the nouns *pother* and *pudder*, but also the usage of the related verbs *to pother* and *to*

pudder, each of which Johnson derives "from the noun."[363] Johnson leaves readers to settle the question of which etymology to prefer, and which orthography to follow.

Just as the notes to Johnson's edition of Shakespeare present Johnson's views alongside those of Warburton, Hanmer, and Theobald, Johnson's etymologies offer his own views alongside those of etymologists such as Skinner, Minshew, and Junius. Likewise, the philological correspondence in *The Gentleman's Magazine* gives space to various commentators who present their reasons and evidence for readers, who must adjudicate among them. All parties to the dialogue expect contention over their assertions, and at least in Johnson's case, it is believed that "there is no danger in conjecture, if it be proposed as conjecture."[364] In all of these fields of inquiry, in which conjecture is unavoidable, Johnson offers what he views to be the best extant evidence, even when that evidence is inconclusive. Johnson's willingness to confess ignorance where unavoidable is consistent with his expectation, expressed both publicly and privately, that knowledge is the product of cumulative work by many hands, and that large works such as the *Dictionary* provide only a foundation upon which others will build. Johnson writes in the *Rambler*, for instance, "Every science was thus far advanced towards perfection, by the emulous diligence of contemporary students, and the gradual

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[363] Johnson's preference for Lye's "Islandick" derivation may also reflect Johnson's seeming preference for "Teutonick" etymons when given the choice between a "Teutonick" original and a "Roman" one. Johnson makes this sort of preference clear in the etymology for *cost*:

> COST.n.s. [*kost*, Dutch. As this word is found in the remotest Teutonick dialects, even in the Islandick, it is not probably derived to us from the Latin *consto*; though it is not unlikely that the French *couster* comes from the Latin.].

See also Johnson's etymologies for *to falter* v.n., *girl* n.s. In the Preface to the *Dictionary* writes, "The two languages from which our primitives have been derived are the *Roman* and *Teutonick*: under the *Roman* I comprehend the *French* and provincial tongues; and under the *Teutonick* range the *Saxon*, *German*, and all their kindred dialects." See Preface, para. 22.

[364] "Preface to Shakespeare, 1765," in Yale *Works*, VII, 108.

discoveries of one age improving upon another."[365] Writing to Irish antiquarian Charles O'Connor, Johnson urges him to write a history "of the Irish nation, from its conversion to Christianity to the invasion from England." Johnson writes, "[D]o what you can easily do without anxious exactness. Lay the foundation, and leave the superstructure to posterity."[366]

Johnson does not always come across as open to rebuttal, of course. In the etymology for *to quaff*, for instance, Johnson rejects the conjectures of Junius and the proposed corruption of Skinner, offering his own alternative, which seems to foreclose further debate.

> To QUAFF.v.a. [of this word the derivation is uncertain: *Junius*, with his usual idleness of conjecture, derives it from the Greek, χυαφιζειν in the Eolick dialect used for νυαϑιζειν.[367] *Skinner* from *go off*, as *go off*, *guoff*, *quoff*, *quaff*. It comes from *coeffer*, Fr. to be drunk.] To drink; to swallow in large draughts. <several quotes>

Yet Johnson's confident declaration that *quaff* "comes from *coeffer*" does not cancel out, even though it seems to belie, his declaration at the beginning of the note that the derivation of *quaff* is uncertain. In the etymology for *hist*, Johnson declares ignorance then immediately declares what the "original" of *hist* "probably…may be," writing, "Of this word I know not the original: probably it may be a corruption of *hush*, *hush it*, *husht*, *hist*.]." Having declared his ignorance, Johnson then follows with the alternately confident and tentative phrase "probably it may be." Ignorance, confidence, and

[365] *Rambler* 108 (30 March 1751), in Yale *Works*, IV, 213.
[366] *Letters* (19 May 1777), III, 24. O'Connor (1710-91) was a member of the Royal Irish Academy and author of *Dissertations on the Ancient History of Ireland* (1753); see *Letters*, I, 151 n.1.
[367] I do not indicate breathings or accent marks.

qualification coexist in one of the *Dictionary* entry's metatextual zones—between the etymological brackets.

Johnson does not generally hesitate to offer his opinion in this particular metatextual zone, but his frequent use of qualitative hedges in his etymologies shows that he is well aware of their tentative nature. He would not have needed to point out that fact in every etymology as he does for *to peep*. In his Preface, Johnson qualifies his pretensions to authority as an etymologist, and indicates that some of the information between the etymological brackets is not even intended to determine the word's etymon, but is included, rather, to provide information useful toward determining an etymology, especially as it pertains to meaning or usage. For example, Johnson sometimes places "*Dutch* and *German* substitutes" between the etymological brackets, "which I consider not as radical, but parallel, not as the parents, but sisters of the *English*." These words are purported to be "related by descent or cognation. . . . It is sufficient, in etymological enquiries, if the senses of kindred words be found such as may easily pass into each other, or such as may both be referred to one general idea."[368] The entry for *to strew*, including its revision, shows how Johnson employs these lexical relations "by descent or cognation" are offered to readers who can consider them when evaluating Johnson's tentative advice on the orthographic choice between *strew* and *strow*:

> *1st edition:*
> To STREW. v.a. [The orthography of this word is doubtful: it is generally written *strew*, and I have followed custom; but *Skinner* likewise proposes *strow*, and *Junius* writes *straw*. Their reasons will appear in the word from which it may be derived. *Strawan*, Gothick; *stroyen*, Dutch; streawian, Sax. *strawen*, German;

[368] Preface, paras. 26, 27.

> *strôer*, Danish. Perhaps *strow* is best, being that which reconciles etymology with pronunciation.]
>
> *4th edition:*
> To STREW. v.a. [The orthography of this word is doubtful: it is sometimes written *strew*, and sometimes *strow*, I have taken both: *Skinner* proposes *strow*, and *Junius* writes *straw*. Their reasons will appear in the word from which it may be derived. *Strawan*, Gothick; *stroyen*, Dutch; streawian[369], Sax. *strawen*, German; *strôer*, Danish. Perhaps *strow* is best, being that which reconciles etymology with pronunciation. See STROW.]

Here Johnson's advice on usage depends on an unresolved etymology, and his judgment on usage is offered as a reasoned proposal, not an edict.

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Johnson's comments on etymology can glide imperceptibly, at times, into comments on usage, and it is crucial to understand this in our readings of Johnson's notes on "corruption," because at times they function as etymologies, at times they function as usage notes, and at times their function and effect lie somewhere amid the three points of what we might call Johnson's hermeneutic triangle: etymology, usage, and meaning. In determining meaning and advising usage, Johnson often turns to etymology; but Johnson's etymologies themselves may be confirmed by meaning as it is found in actual usage, as is seen in Johnson's definition of the intransitive sense of *to atone*:

> To ATO'NE.v.n.[from *at one*, as the etymologists remark, *to be at one*, is the same as *to be in concord*. This derivation is much confirmed by the following passage of Shakespeare, and appears to be the sense still retained in Scotland.] 1. To agree; to accord.
>
> He and Ausidus can no more *atone*,
> Than violentest contrariety. *Shakesp. Coriolanus*.

[369] In both versions of *to strew* I have changed a "winn" to "w."

Because Johnson's definitions often arise from the usage of older authors, such as Shakespeare and Spenser, he often will use the evidence of contemporary oral language in areas retaining usage that is scarce or obsolete in the English of southeastern England that was taken to be standard English. So in the entry for *atone*, Johnson's etymology and definition are supported by a Shakespeare passage and Scottish usage. The interplay between usage, meaning, and etymology in this entry reveals the kind of overlap among Johnson's interpretive strategies that one often finds in his metatextual commentary, and the valence of Johnson's term "corruption" can shift, be bivalent, or be multivalent when used in Johnson's metatextual commentary. Johnson's commentary on *bestraught* functions simultaneously as a comment on usage, etymology, and meaning.

> BESTRA'UGHT.particip. [Of this participle I have not found the verb; by analogy we may derive it from *bestract*; perhaps it is corrupted from *distraught*.] Distracted; mad; out of one's senses; out of one's wits.
>
> Ask Marian, the fat alewife, if she knew me not. What!
> I am not *bestraught*. *Shakespeare~~. Tam. the Shrew~~*.

While Johnson defines this word, his note raises questions about the very status of the word, which may merely be "corrupted from *distraught*"—corrupted by Shakespeare or by one of the many textual intermediaries (printers, actors) between Shakespeare and reader to whom Johnson ascribes textual corruptions. Johnson may even suspect that the "corruption," if it is a "corruption," was an intentional malapropism employed by Shakespeare to characterize Christopher Sly, the drunk tinker who speaks these lines.[370] By questioning the status of the word, Johnson's comment on "corruption" is a kind of

[370] In a "General Observation" note added in 1773 to Johnson's edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Johnson comments not on malapropisms, but an analogous "mode of forming ridiculous characters" whereby they use "language distorted and depraved by provincial or foreign pronunciation." See Arthur Sherbo, "1773: The Year of Revision," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1973): 36.

caveat lector, a warning to the reader that this word may be a textual misprint or mistake that should not be repeated. At the same time, the connection for Johnson between *bestraught* and *distraught* seems the primary basis for Johnson's definition, and alongside his etymology—"by analogy we may derive it from *bestract*"—the use of "corruption" serves as an alternate etymology to Johnson's conjecture that *bestract*/*bestraught* may have once existed alongside *distract/distraught*.[371]

Trying to determine to which side of the prescriptive/descriptive divide Johnson's use of "corruption" falls can be difficult, and is not neatly resolved by judging that "corruption" is descriptive when used in etymologies and prescriptive when used in usage notes. At times, Johnson's observation on corruption may serve both as etymology and as at least an implicit usage note. In the etymology for *meslin*, Johnson's comment on corruption, again, serves as the basis for an alternative etymology.

> ME'SLIN. n.s. [from *mesler*, French, to mix; or rather corruptly pronounced for *mescellane* <listed as *miscellane* in 1755>. See MASLIN.] Mixed corn: as, wheat and rie. *Hooker* < *meslin*>; *Tusser* <*mestlin*>.

The 1755 edition, lacking an entry for *maslin*, does contain one for *mastlin*, very close to entry for *meslin*.

> MA'STLIN. n.s. [from *mesler*, French, to mingle; or rather corrupted from *miscellane*.] Mixed corn; as, wheat and rye. *Tusser's Husb.*

Johnson's comment on corruption is yet another conjecture about the word's origin, but by the time Johnson arrives at the entry for *mislen* he drops the possible French etymon, perhaps more confident in his own analysis of corruption from *miscellane*.

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[371] Johnson lists "destraught" as the old form of the participle for *distract*: "To DISTRA'CT. *part. pass. distracted*; anciently *distraught*; and sometimes *distract*. [*distractus*, Lat.]."

> MI'SLEN. n.s. [corrupted from *miscellane*.] Mixed corn: as, wheat and rie.
>
> They commonly sow those lands with wheat, *mislen*, and barley. *Mortimer's Husbandry*.

By the time Johnson decides to drop *mesler* as a possible etymon for *mislen*, he has already considered this question three times, in the entries for *mastlin*, *meslin*, as well as the entry for *miscellane*.

> MISCELLA'NE. n.s. [*miscellaneus*, Lat. This is corrupted into *mastlin* or *mestlin*.] Mixed corn: as, wheat and rye.
>
> It is thought to be of use to make some *miscellane* in corn; as if you sow a few beans with wheat, your wheat will be the better. *Bacon's Nat. Hist. No. 670*.

When Johnson later revises the *Dictionary*, he adds an entry for *maslin*, and again drops *mesler* as a possible etymon.

> MA'SLIN. adj. [corrupted from *miscellane*.] Composed of various kinds; as, *maslin* bread, made of wheat and rye. <no quote>

In all of these cases Johnson's comment on corruption serves as his best explanation of a word's derivation. This alone does not suggest a preference for *miscellane*—a form which, with respect to the forms *maslin* or *mastlin*, preserves more traces of its etymology—but for those readers who subcribe to Johnson's expressed view in the Preface that "I have always considered" the "true orthography" of words as "depending on their derivation," the other forms, *mastlin*, *meslin*, and *mislen*, become less attractive and perhaps implicitly stigmatized if *miscellaneus* is the etymon.[372] Moreover, *miscellane* may carry more weight because it is attested by Bacon in his *Natural History*. Johnson's

[372] The *Dictionary*, however, does not resolve the spelling questions it raises about these forms because *meslin*, if one takes the French *mesler* as its etymon, preserves more traces of its etymology than a form like *mastlen*. For Johnson the etymon that matters most is not the one that is historically most prior, but the one responsible for introducing the word to English. Thus "I write *enchant*, *enchantment*, *enchanter*, after the *French*, and *incantation* after the *Latin*; thus *entire* is chosen rather than *intire*, because it passed to us not from the *Latin integer*, but from the *French entier*." See Preface, para. 11.

judgment that a word is derived by means of corruption does not necessarily proscribe that word, as the examples of *gun* and *stocking* attest. But by listing *miscellane* as an entry word alongside such "corrupted" forms as *maslin*, *mastlin*, *meslin*, and *mislin* Johnson's etymologies of those words may implicitly mark them as less preferable to *miscellane*. If so, those etymologies function as implicit usage notes. At the same time, Johnson's interpretation of those forms as corruptions of *miscellane* performs a philological function, providing an etymological basis, however inaccurate, for the meaning of *maslin* and its orthographic counterparts, as found in the texts of Tusser, Mortimer, or common parlance. In any case, Johnson leaves room for future scholars to correct his etymologies and for readers to dispute his spelling preferences. As he notes in the Preface, his work "is yet capable of many improvements." The "orthography which I recommend is still controvertible, the etymology which I adopt is uncertain, and perhaps frequently erroneous."[373]

As suggested in the previous chapter, the structure of Johnson's entries—with etymologies generally occurring within brackets and usage notes at the end of an entry—belies the fact that usage notes may appear within the brackets and etymological speculations may occur at the end of an entry within or without the brackets. Thus we should be prepared to read both of these spaces within an entry as containing metatextual commentaries that reflect on or complement one another, rather than operating in isolation. The location of the term "corruption," in itself, does not determine in any simple way the import of the term. The signification of "corruption" can vary along a

[373] Preface, para. 69.

spectrum from descriptive to prescriptive, sometimes signifying both at the same time, whether it appears within the etymological brackets or at the end of a definition, in a space usually reserved for usage notes. The context of the term "corruption," both within the entry, and alongside closely related entries, is important for interpreting its signification.

These caveats aside, it is possible to suggest some seeming tendencies in Johnson's uses of "corruption." First, the term "corruption," which is often interpreted simply as a usage note, occurs more often than not between the etymological brackets, and often carries some etymological significance. In the etymology for *belfry*, Johnson's language suggests his disapproval of the process of corruption, but his discussion of corruption serves as a conjectural etymology.

> BE'LFRY. n.s. [*Beffroy*, in French, is a tower; which was perhaps the true word, till those, who knew not its original, corrupted it to *belfry*, because bells were in it.] The place where the bells are rung.
>
> Fetch the leathern bucket that hangs in the *belfry*; that is curiously painted before, and will make a figure. *Gay~~'s What d' ye call it~~*.

As is the case with many other examples we have seen, there is no indication that Johnson is urging readers to use *beffroy*, "which was perhaps the true word," or even a spelling more true to the presumed etymon. Johnson's qualifier, "perhaps," indicates that Johnson is not even sure that *beffroy* is the etymon or the "true word." Even if the discussion of *belfry* is one of those inquiries into the "true orthography" of words, which, as Johnson declares in the Preface, "I have always considered as depending on their derivation," it is not clear that the inquiry also functions as a proscription of *belfry*. The normative effect of this etymology is that it reinforces the idea that ignorance of

etymology corrupts the language, and that such ignorance is regrettable and should be avoided, even if it is too late to do anything about *belfry*, whose corruption may stand as one of those things "tolerated among the imperfections of human things, and which require only to be registered, that they may not be increased, and ascertained, that they may not be confounded."[374]

When the noun and participle forms, "corruption" and "corrupted," appear in an entry they do not necessarily denote prescription except when accompanied by a modifier indicates a clearly prescriptive message or intent. For example, under the entry for *lesser* Johnson calls it "a barbarous corruption of *less*, formed by the vulgar from the habit of terminating comparatives in *er*; afterwards adopted by poets, and then by writers of prose." The fact Johnson has to call it a "barbarous" corruption suggests that simply to call it a "corruption" would not suffice to indicate Johnson's disapproval of this form. Johnson's account of how a lexical corruption is transmitted from person to person reads like a morality tale in miniature. It shows how corruption tends to spread and reminds the reader that the spread of such corruptions might be avoided by a kind of verbal abstinence. Such words spread both by the "habit" and adoption of speakers and writers who embrace them. Not content with saying this much, Johnson adds another point to underscore the moral, even as that point seems simultaneously to indicate Johnson's recalcitrant resignation to the "authority" of "custom":

> LE'SSER. adj. A barbarous corruption of *less*, formed by the vulgar from the habit of terminating comparatives in *er*; afterwards adopted by poets, and then by writers of prose, till it has all the authority which a mode originally erroneous can derive from custom.

[374] Preface, para. 6.

In this entry, the context of Johnson's comment on "corruption" seems to underscore a prescriptive intent that the term on its own, used alternately for prescriptive and descriptive purposes, does not necessarily convey. Here Johnson's comments on corruption seem calculated not to address philological questions, but to operate as a salutary reminder of how corruption spreads, even among those who presumably should know better. Both *lesser* and its relative *worser*, in fact, were listed by Johnson in his original "Scheme" for the *Dictionary* as examples of the "[b]arbarous and impure Words" he would brand "with some note of infamy," adding that "they are carefully to be eradicated wherever they are found, and they may be discovered too frequently in the best authors."[375]

Johnson certainly discourages corruption, but the tendencies he derides under the umbrella term "corruption" form the basis of his understanding of how languages and texts change. The morally loaded sense of "corruption" is never simply extricable from Johnson's use of the word, but there are times when Johnson's use of the term shifts from the field of moral philosophy to that of natural philosophy, when Johnson uses the term to explain or analyze, not just to deride or prescribe. Unlike Johnson's eighteenth-century readers, we are less likely to be sensitive to this kind of semantic slippage in the term "corruption," made possible by its simultaneous use in the eighteenth century as a term of both moral and natural philosophy. Thus Johnson's observations on corruption are not

[375] Samuel Johnson, "A Short Scheme for compiling a new Dictionary of the English Language." The manuscript for the "Scheme" is reproduced in facsimile in *The R. B. Adam Library Relating to Dr. Samuel Johnson and His Era*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), pages unnumbered. This citation can be found on page 17 of the manuscript, which is numbered as such in Johnson's hand. Johnson includes this same passage, only slightly revised, in the *Plan*, para. 66.

merely the prescriptions of a persnickety lexicographer; they constitute Johnson's conjectures and assumptions about how language changes.

Herein lies the cause of aporia, or at least ambiguity, in Johnson's use of corruption: he uses the same term, "corruption," both as a prescriptive usage label and as a term of inquiry and analysis. In some cases, its prescriptive force is apparent in entries like *clouted, thenceforth*, *uncomeatable*, and *to powder*:

> CLO'UTED. *participial adj*. Congealed; coagulated: corruptly used for *clotted*.
> I've seen her skim the *clouted* cream,
> And press from spongy curds the milky stream.*Gay's Past*.
>
> THE'NCEFORTH. adv. [*thence* and *forth*.] 2. *From thenceforth* is a barbarous corruption, though it has crept into books where it ought not to be found. *Milton*.; *Locke*.[376]
>
> UNCO'MEATABLE. adj. Inaccessible; unattainable. A low, corrupt word. <sic>
>
> To PO'WDER. v.n. To come tumultuously and violently. A low corrupt word.
> Whilst two companions were disputing it at sword's point, down comes a kite *powdering* upon them, and gobbets up both. *L'Estrange*.

Johnson's use of the term in the default location for usage notes and his use of modifiers "low" and "barbarous" reinforce the status here of "corrupt" as a prescriptive term. So does the use of the adverb and adjective "corruptly" and "corrupt." A word described as "corruptly used" for another word would seem to demonstrate poor usage. Likewise, the phrase a "corrupt word," like the phrases "bad word" or a "low word," seems to suggest something about the word's status. The emphasis in these adjectival and adverbial uses (e.g., "PARMA'CITTY. n.s. Corruptedly for *sperma ceti*") seems to be placed not on how the word is derived or formed, but on how it is used. The use of the adverb "corruptedly"

[376] 1755: *From thenceforth* is a barbarous corruption crept into later books.

or "corruptly" suggests that the entry word in question is used in a reprehensible or incorrect way, and use of the adjective "corrupt" suggests that corruption is a core attribute of the word and effectively brands the word as one to be avoided.[377] This use of "corruption" is well known enough, but some entries straddle the line between the descriptive and prescriptive functions of the term "corruption." In the entry for *glum*, Johnson's comment on corruption serves as an etymology for the word, but the etymology is joined with a usage note designating the word with two cautionary labels, "low" and "cant":

> GLUM. adj. [A low cant word formed by corrupting *gloom*.] Sullen; stubbornly grave.
>
> Some, when they hear a story, look *glum*, and cry, Well, what then? *Guardian*.

In the entry for for *compatible*, the term "corrupted" both serves as the etymology and the basis for Johnson's judgment that *competible* "ought always to be used":

> COMPA'TIBLE. adj. [corrupted, by an unskilful compliance with pronunciation, from *competible*, from *competo*, Latin, to *suit*, to *agree*. *Competible* is found in good writers, and ought always to be used.]
> 1. Suitable to; fit for; consistent with; not incongruous to.
>
> The object of the will is such a good as is *compatible* to an intellectual nature. *Hale's Origin of Mankind.*
>
> 2. Consistent; agreeable.
>
> Our poets have joined together such qualities as are by nature the most *compatible*; valour with anger, meekness with piety, and prudence with dissimulation. *Broome*.

While the mention of corruption in one of Johnson's etymologies, as we have seen, does not in itself amount to a recommendation on usage, its proximity in this entry to an

[377] Yet when writing of "low terms," Johnson points out in *Rambler* 168 that words are not innately "low;" such values are "arbitrarily and capriciously established." "No word is naturally or intrinsically meaner than another; our opinion therefore of words, as of other things arbitrarily and capriciously established, depends wholly upon accident and custom." Yale *Works*, V, 126.

unequivocal usage note gives it more prescriptive force. So does the language of the entry for *competible*, wherein *compatible* is described as the result of "corrupt orthography":

> COMPE'TIBLE. adj. [from *competo*, Latin. For this word a corrupt orthography has introduced *compatible*.] Suitable to; consistent with. <quotes follow>

Yet the fact that Johnson has to add, "*Competible* . . .ought always to be used," suggests that to include the term "corrupted," on its own, was perhaps not sufficient to indicate a preference for *competible*. In the entry for *to hend*, Johnson's note on corruption is a conjectural emendation of a Shakespeare line. Johnson registers his opinion, yet the note, in sum, is as much a note of inquiry as it is a corrective note:

> To HEND. v.a. [*hendan*, Saxon, from *hendo*, low Latin, which seems borrowed from *hand* or *hond*, Teutonick.]
> 1. To seize; to lay hold on. *Fairfax~~, b. ii.~~*
> 2. To croud[378]; to surround. Perhaps the following passage is corrupt, and should be read *hemmed*; or it may mean to take possession.
>
> The generous and gravest citizens
> Have *hent* the gates, and very near upon
> The duke is entering. *Shakespeare. ~~Meas. for Measure~~*.

If "corruption" is, for Johnson, a hortatory usage term, it is just as often a heuristic term in Johnson's vocabulary of philological inquiry, rather than an expression of abuse.

III. Types of Corruption, "Kindred" Letters, and William Holder's Elements of Speech

While modern readers tend to read Johnson's use of the term "corruption" in the *Dictionary* exclusively as a prescriptive usage note, our readings of the way Johnson uses "corruption" in the *Dictionary*, including parallels to Johnson's derivation of *jour*, show that it frequently operates for Johnson as a descriptively focused analytical concept that is crucial to Johnson's developing understanding of language change. Johnson often uses

[378] 1773: crowd

the term "corruption" to describe changes of linguistic form—the change from *d* to *g* to *j*—in addition to the changes of meaning explained by Lockean associations of ideas. Johnson's descriptive terms of language change, which include "coalition," "composition," and "contraction," are just as important to Johnson's theory of language as are its more widely discussed Lockean foundations. Johnson's general intention of ordering within an entry the senses of a word—from its "primitive signification" to "the remoter or metaphorical signification"—showed him how simple and complex ideas could be separated, reassociated, and recombined in ways that eluded rational ordering schemes.[379] But in addition to semantic changes, Johnson encountered copious evidence of sound change as he and his amanuenses sifted and sorted words, their various forms, and their lexical parents and cousins. Under the entry for *mellow*, Johnson offers an alternative to Skinner's etymology, but admits that Skinner's conjecture assumes a process that is common in speech: "ME'LLOW.adj. [mearwa,[380] soft, Saxon, *Skinner*: more nearly from *mollis*, *molle*, *mollow*, *mellow*; though *r* is indeed easily changed into *l* in common speech.]." His continual encounters with spelling variants, his use of cross-references, observed changes from etymon to head-word, differences among cognates, different pronunciations of the same word in different dialects, and the numerous "corruptions" Johnson notes, presented Johnson with the effects of sound changes, whose processes differed from the ways words changed in meaning.

James Sledd and Gwin Kolb, the only scholars to address Johnson's treatment of such changes in form, do so only briefly. They argue that Johnson, in his etymologies,

[379] *Plan*, paras. 41, 47.
[380] I have changed a "winn'' to a "w."

draws on one of the "main foundations of eighteenth-century etymologizing," the "elaborately tabulated 'mutations of the letters,' which can be traced ultimately to the classical grammarians." "As for the mutations of the letters," they write, "the chief conclusion to be drawn from them is that any letter, and presumably any sound, could become any other, without regard to time, place, or linguistic relationship."[381] Yet evidence from the *Dictionary* suggests that Johnson's understanding of sound changes, which he would describe as changes in "letters," were not so unconstrained.

In conjecturing about corruptions, Johnson draws on his own developing assumptions about likely sound changes and about common processes of language change. As the entries for *gun*, *to drivel*, and *huggermugger* suggest, the assumptions underlying some of Johnson's etymologies are clearer when we look at those etymologies in the context of other, related entries, including some of the *Dictionary*'s generally overlooked entries for individual letters. Johnson, in an informal way, began to draw on observations in one entry to make judgments in another. As Johnson worked more and more with spelling variants, cognates, and etymological deductions, he began to develop intuitions about what kinds of language changes were common and therefore plausible. These intuitions make their way into Johnson's often incorrect etymologies, but those etymologies are not completely ad hoc, as is usually assumed. They often draw on loosely principled assumptions about what letters are "kindred" letters in Johnson's terms, on assumptions about what kinds of processes are "usual" or common in language change. In making linguistic judgments about corruptions, Johnson may also have been

[381] Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 38-39.

inspired by the detailed and quite sound, by modern standards, phonetic work of seventeenth-century phonetician William Holder.

* * * * * *

Johnson occasionally points out, or allows his illustrative quotations to point out, that certain language changes are "usual" or "common." As we have already seen, Johnson includes some of William Camden's observations on "usual" processes that affect particular letters, such as the "melting of *g*." In addition, an entry whose text is lifted from "Gibson's Camden" notes the loss of *o* "in after times," in certain contexts.

> PRES. *Pres*, *prest*, seem to be derived from the Saxon, *preost*, a priest; it being usual in after times to drop the letter *o* in like cases. *Gibson's Camden*.

Johnson himself notes that the tendency for a certain letter to be "changed into" another. Under *guise*, Johnson writes that it is the "same with *wise*; *guise*, French; wisa, Saxon, the w[382] or *w* being changed as is common into *g*." And in Johnson's proposition that *drivel* was "corrupted' from *dripple* by means of *dribble* he applies assumptions about what letters are often confounded with one another to fashion etymological conjectures, which are conjectures about language change. Johnson's etymology of *drivel* depends on assumptions about likely language changes, assumptions reinforced by his own observations of English as he worked on the *Dictionary*. P and B, as the entries for those letters inform us, are often "confounded" with one another by the Germans and the Welsh; B and V are often confounded, or used "indifferently' by "the Gascons" and the Spaniards.

[382] The three preceding "w"s are "winns" in the *Dictionary*.

In addition to specific changes from one letter to another, Johnson notes that certain general processes of change are "common" or "usual." Among the terms Johnson uses for these processes are words widely recognized by linguists today—metathesis, contraction, reduplication—as well as terms for processes not common in modern professional linguistic jargon, such as the dropping of "harsh" consonants. Starting with the last example first, Johnson suggests in his etymology for *bag* that "harsh" consonants are usually dropped.

> BAG.n.s. [*belge*, Sax. from whence perhaps by dropping, as is usual, the harsh consonant, came *bege*, *bage*, *bag*.]

Johnson's comment about a process that "is usual," along with another of his conjectural gradual corruptions, together help explain his etymology, by which he proposes one way to connect the given data points in his etymology: *bag* and *belge*. Johnson notes metathesis in the entry for *scruff*, writing that this word is the "same, I suppose, with *scurf*, by a metathesis usual in pronunciation," a note that was likely informed by his observation of metathesis in other entries. "Gibson's Camden" provides an example of metathetic variation, by which letters in a word are transposed: "BRUN, BRAN, BROWN, BOURN, BURN, are all derived from the Saxon, born, bourn, brunna, burna; all signifying a river or brook. *Gibson~~'s Camden~~*." Under the entry for *crud* Johnson writes that it is "commonly written *curd*." He also observes that the verb *to girn* "[s]eems to be a corruption of *grin*," and in his etymology for *bird*, Johnson derives it from "*bird*, or *brid*, a chicken, Saxon." Johnson notes a common contraction in the entry for *pence*, which is the "plural of *penny*; formed from *pennies*, by a contraction usual in the rapidity

of colloquial speech." Johnson's etymology of *pickapack* identifies it as an instance of a "reduplication very common in our language":

> PI'CKAPACK.adv. [from *pack*, by a reduplication very common in our language.] In manner of a pack.
>
> In a hurry she whips up her darling under her arms, and carries the other a *pickapack* upon her shoulders. *L'Estr*.

In addition to these common processes of change, Johnson notes assimilatory processes in his entries for the particles *en*, *il*, and *im*:

> EN. An inseparable particle borrowed by us from the French, and by the French formed from the Latin *in*. Many words are uncertainly written with *en* or *in*. In many words en is changed into *em* for more easy pronunciation.
>
> IL, before words beginning with *l*, stands for *in*.[383]
>
> IM is used commonly, in composition, for *in* before mute letters.[384]
>
> What is *im* in Latin, when it is not negative, is often *em* in French; and our writers, as the Latin or French occurs to their minds, use *im* or *em*: formerly *im* was more common, and now *em* seems to prevail.

What is interesting about Johnson's comments on "usual" processes is that they refer, and in the case of assimilation allude, not merely to processes of language change that operate on a particular word or particle, but rather to linguistic changes that operate on particular categories ("harsh" consonants) and in particular contexts ("before mute letters"). Contraction, and reduplication refer to linguistic changes that operate even more generally in the language. In other words, these comments on language change show Johnson trying to discern a kind of order in the ways that words change. As he acquires more experience with the lexicon, noting how individual words change over time and space, Johnson views certain language changes with enough frequency that he begins to

[383] This entry follows the entry for *ill* adv. and immediately precedes the entry for *illachrymable*.
[384] This entry precedes the entry for *image*.

consider them "common." Once Johnson determines a type of language change to be common, he can use it to explain how or why a word changed.

Metathesis, contraction, reduplication, and even "corruption," constitute elements of Johnson's vocabulary of linguistic description. Johnson uses these concepts, even when he does not name them explicitly, to identify patterns in language change that he then uses to conjecture how a word might have changed when he lacks conclusive data. In the revised entry for *to gird*, Johnson adds an etymology, in which he employs the notion of metathesis, or "transposition," for lack of evidence.

> To GIRD.v.n.[Of this word in this sense I know not the original; it may be formed by a very customary transposition from *gride* or *cut*.] To break a scornful jest; to gibe; to sneer. *Drayton*.; *Shakespeare's Henry IV~~, p. ii.~~*

Johnson's seeming purpose in discussing this "very customary transposition" is interpretive rather than prescriptive. Johnson's conjectural etymology proposes an origin that is semantically closer to the sense of Johnson's definition of the word, which seems semantically unrelated to the definitions for the transitive verb *to gird*, which generally pertain to binding, surrounding, encircling, investing (with clothes or equipment).[385] When read in the context of these comments on metathesis, Johnson's observation that the verb *to girn* "[s]eems to be a corruption of *grin*," even if it serves as a proscription against *to girn*, also serves as a conjectural etymology that reveals the way Johnson observed what he saw as the lamentable processes of language change and then made use

[385] The senses for this verb generally pertain to binding, surrounding, encircling, investing (with clothes or equipment). Johnson's 9th signification for *to gird* v.a. in 1773 is "To reproach; to gibe," a definition moved to the end of the list from its position as the 7th definition out of 9 in 1755. The move to the end of the list may signal that, of all the senses listed in that entry, the last one is the farthest afield from the etymon. For details of this kind of practice, as Johnson planned to employ it, see Johnson's *Plan*. Johnson's entries do not always bear out this plan.

of those kinds of observations, which were reinforced by his cumulative experiences with the lexicon, as principles (even when they are unstated explicitly) when he made the case for a certain etymology.

In a passage Johnson abbreviates under his entry for "corruption," Edward Brerewood attributes the changes in Greek from its classical state to "four kindes of corruption" that "are very common in their language." He writes that the "greatest part of the corruption" of Greek

> proceeded from no other cause, then [sic] their owne negligence, or affectation. As First, . . . by mutilation of some words. . . . Secondly, by compaction of seuerall words into one. . . . Thirdly, by confusion of sounde, as making no difference in the pronouncing of [certain] vowels. . . and dipthongues. . . . Fourthly, by translation of accents, from the syllables to which in ancient pronouncing they belonged, to others. And all those foure kindes of corruption, are very common in their language.[386]

While Johnson does not rely on Brerewood's terms of corruption in the *Dictionary*, three kinds of corruption Brerewood describes—"mutilation," "compaction," and "confusion" of sound—are analogous to processes Johnson assumes to be highly productive mechanisms of language change, mechanisms he describes as contraction, coalition and compounding (or composition), and the "confounding" of letters. If language change is corruption, then these latter terms are those terms of corruption rarely discussed in treatments of Johnson, language change, and the *Dictionary*. These terms and the philological uses to which Johnson employs them were, of course, by no means original to Johnson. They were part of the vocabulary he inherited from the same philological discourses that inform his use of "corruption." These terms are important because when

[386] Edward Brerewood, *Enquiries touching the diuersity of languages, and religions through the chiefe parts of the world* (London, 1614), 11.

Johnson makes conjectures about language change, he seems to assume the operation of these processes, sometimes working in tandem, even when he does not invoke them explicitly.

"Contraction" and "compound" were terms used "in grammar," and the *Dictionary* defines their grammatical senses, respectively, as "To form one word from two or more words" and "The reduction of two vowels or syllables to one." We have already seen Johnson's treatment of "contraction" in the introduction to this study. In the Preface Johnson writes that "composition" as "one of the chief characteristics of language," so he inserts "great numbers of compounded words" in order that the "frame of our language and modes of our combination" might be "amply discovered."[387] Because he sees "composition" as such a productive process in language change, Johnson invokes it in his conjectural etymologies, as in the etymologies for *oftentimes* and *wicked*:

> OFTENTI'MES.adv. [*often* and *times*. From the composition of this word it is reasonable to believe, that *oft* was once an adjective, of which *often* was the plural; which seems retained in the phrase *thine often infirmities*. See OFTEN.]
>
> WI'CKED.adj. [Of this common word the etymology is very obscure: *wicca*, is *an enchanter*; *wæccan*, is to oppress; *wirian*, *to curse*; *wiced*, is *crooked*: all these however *Skinner* rejects for *vitiatus*, Latin. Perhaps it is a compound of *wic*, *vile*, *bad*, and *head*, *malum caput*.]

Johnson's conjectures often lead him astray, but they provide a revealing glimpse of his assumptions about linguistic processes of change because they show his linguistic reasoning in action, when he is put on the spot by a philological puzzle.

Johnson defines "coalition" as "[u]nion in one mass or body; conjunction of separate parts in one whole." He uses the term "coalition," for instance, to describe the

[387] Preface, para. 38.

interjection *begone* ("only a coalition of the words *be gone*.") and the preposition *instead* in the entry for *instead of* ("A word formed by the coalition of *in* and *stead*, place."). He also uses it to define *diphthong* ("A coalition of two vowels to form one sound; as *vain*, *leaf*, *Caesar*."). Unlike the terms "contraction," "compound," and "composition," "coalition" is a word Johnson hardly uses as an explicit heuristic term, but the fact that he does use it at times, suggests that he was free to employ the notion of "coalition" as a concept even when he did not use the term explicitly.[388] Thus, Johnson describes *begone* as a "coalition" between the etymology brackets for *wobegone* we only find "[*wo* and *begone*.]."

Johnson often seems to view these processes as co-conspirators in language change, and at times the processes seem hard to distinguish from one another. Johnson writes that the obsolete negative particle *ne* "was formerly of very frequent use, both singly and by contraction in compound words, as *nill* for *ne will* or *will not*; *nis* for *ne is* or *is not*." He describes *since* as "formed by contraction from *sithence*, or *sith thence*,

[388] Johnson uses the term "coalition" explicitly in the *Plan* and in the *Dictionary*. Johnson uses "coalition," along with "contraction," in the *Plan* to describe "metrical licenses." "It may be likewise proper to remark metrical licenses, such as contractions, *generous*, *gen*'*rous*, *reverend*, *rev*'*rend*; and coalitions, as *region*, *question*." See *Plan*, para. 21. Aside from the examples in entries for *begone*, *diphthong*, and *instead of*, I have only found four examples in the *Dictionary* of "coalition" used as a descriptive linguistic term: under the entries for *abandon* ("*Pasquier* thinks it a coalition of *a ban donner*, to give up a proscription"), *albeit* ("a coalition of the words *all be it so*. *Skinner*."), *triphthong* ("A coalition of three vowels to form one sound: as, *eau*, *eye*."), and once in the *Dictionary*'s prefatory "GRAMMAR." Johnson's use of "coalesce" in the "GRAMMAR" suggests he uses it as a verb corresponding to the noun "coalition." Johnson writes, "*O* coalesces into a diphthong with *a*, as *moan*, *groan*, *approach*." After noting that *O* is joined "[w]ith *i*, as *oil*, *soil*, *moil*, *noisome*," Johnson adds, "This coalition of letters seems to unite the sounds of the two letters as far as two sounds can be united without being destroyed, and therefore approaches more nearly than any combination in our tongue to the notion of a diphthong." Johnson also notes that *U* "coalesces with *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*; but has rather in these combinations the force of *w*, as *quaff*, *quest*, *quit*, *quite*, *languish*; sometimes in *ui* the *i* loses its sound, as in *juice*." I have found no other similar examples of "coalesce" in the *Dictionary*.

from sithe**,** Saxon."[389] He lists *Habnab* is listed as deriving from "*hap ne hap*, or *nap*; as *would ne would, will ne will*; that is, *let it happen or not*." *Ne*, by that "contraction in compound words" Johnson describes, combines with *hap* to form *nap*, which then coalesces with the preceding *hap*. Likewise, Johnson writes that the adjective *dich* "seems corrupted from *dit* for *do it*. *Howd'ye* is "[c]ontracted from *how do ye*." *Grovel*, Johnson opines, "may perhaps come by gradual corruption from *ground fell*."[390]

In addition to these types of corruption, Johnson phonetic "confusion," or the act of "confounding" letters, as a significant mechanism of language change. This "confusion" takes place, not only because of negligence or ignorance, but because certain letters are "kindred" letters. Just as Johnson posits in his derivation of *jour* that "*Diu* is, by inaccurate ears, or inaccurate pronunciation, easily confounded with *giu*," he observes analogous examples of phonetic confusion among "kindred" letters, letters having "a near affinity" with one another based on their articulatory properties. So in the *Dictionary* entry for *B*, as we have seen in the introduction, we find that *B* "has a near affinity with the other labial letters, and is confounded by the Germans with *P*, and by the Gascons with *V*." Likewise, the entry for *V* notes that "*V*, the consonant, has a sound nearly approaching to those of *b* and *f*. With *b* it is by the Spaniards and Gascons always confounded, and in the Runick alphabet is expressed by the same character with *f*, distinguished only by a diacritical point." Johnson notes under the entry for *F* that its "kindred letter is *V*, which, in the Islandick alphabet, is only distinguished from it by a point in the body of the letter." Under the entry for *dad*/*daddy* Johnson finds it

[389] The "th" in *sithe* is an "eth" (ð) in the *Dictionary*.
[390] 1755 has "feel"

"remarkable, that, in all parts of the world, the word for father, as first taught to children, is compounded of *a* and *t*, or the kindred letter *d* differently placed; as *tad*, Welsh; . . . [391]Greek; atta, Gothick; tata, Latin."[392] Johnson's observations on the "child's way of expressing father" reveal his lack of comparative evidence, and we might like to know more about precisely why he finds it worthy of remark, but for our present purposes what is interesting is the attention Johnson gives here and in other entries to "kindred" letters and letters having a "near affinity" with one another, such as *f* and *v*, *p* and *b*, *t* and *d*. Throughout the *Dictionary* Johnson records the evidence for such affinities, even he does not comment on them, as when he records various cognates for the verb *to have*: "[*haban*, Gothick; *habban*, Saxon; *hebben*, Dutch; *avoir*, French; *avere*, Ital.]"

For Johnson, these affinities are a matter of linguistic record, since one can find evidence of them within languages (German and Spanish) and cross-linguistically (in the various equivalents to *daddy* and the cognates of *have*). Moreover, these affinities or phonetic relationships are describable in terms of articulatory properties, since kindred letters are articulated at the same place in the mouth. Johnson often seems to assume the plausibility of such affinities when he makes conjectures about language change. Thus *to grabble* is "probably corrupted from *grapple*," and *fitch* is "a colloquial corruption of *vetch*." The proposed relationships between these words depend, of course, not just on sound correspondences but semantic connections. Yet Johnson's seeming assumptions "kindred" letters and articulatory affinities suggest that his notions about letter

[391] The Greek letters here are difficult to discern.
[392] Johnson either forgot, or was unfamiliar with, the fact that *abba* is Aramaic for something akin to *papa*, another form he seems to overlook.

"mutations" were an important aspect of his understanding of "linguistic corruption," and that these notions were not as unconstrained as Sledd and Kolb suggest. In fact, the phonetic work of William Holder provided Johnson a principled model by which to understand these phonetic affinities.

* * * * * *

Johnson's ideas about language are usually described as Lockean, but as much as Locke's theories about the association of ideas informed Johnson's views on language, our examination of his use of corruption, and his derivation of the word *jour*—from *diurnus* to *giorno* to *jour*—reveals that a number of Johnson's linguistic judgments in the *Dictionary* owe little to Locke. As several studies have now shown, Locke's ideas about language and the way words represent ideas and their various combinations informed Johnson's defining practices and his notions of semantics in important ways, but Johnson's comments on corruption and his working assumptions about recurring processes of language change are not adequately accounted for by referring to Locke's ideas. Johnson's observations on metathesis, contraction, reduplication, and corruption draw on his familiarity with the critical traditions and vocabularies of etymologists, textual critics, antiquarians, grammarians and rhetoricians, all of which were components of the broad field known as philology; they also draw on the early modern English phonetic tradition of John Wallis and, more importantly, William Holder.

Robert DeMaria, Jr., in his comprehensive study of the *Dictionary*'s illustrative quotations, calls Holder the "linguistics expert" of the *Dictionary*.[393] But in an essay on Johnson's "theory of language," DeMaria falsely labels Holder as Lockean in his approach to language. Relying on the notion that "Johnson's practice as a lexicographer embodies the theory that it expresses in its illustrative quotations," DeMaria argues that "Johnson's illustrative quotations contain an exposition of the Lockean theory of language in excerpts from Locke, Isaac Watts, William Holder, Robert South, Henry Felton, and others."[394] The main problem with labeling Holder a Lockean is that his *Elements of Speech*, based on work in the early 1660s, was published in 1669, over twenty years before Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Holder's *Elements of Speech: An Essay of Inquiry into the Natural Production of Letters*, described by one modern editor as "a landmark in the history of English phonetics," shows no influence of Locke's ideas.[395] More significantly for our purposes, to list Holder as just one of many proponents of "the Lockean theory" of language is to overlook the very expertise he brings as a linguist both to the *Dictionary* and to Johnson's own linguistic interpretations.

In a survey of linguistics in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, Pierre Swiggers cites Holder's *Elements* and John Wallis's *Grammatica linguae Anglicanae*

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[393] Robert DeMaria, Jr., *Johnson's* Dictionary *and the Language of Learning*, 162. DeMaria also calls Holder a "spelling reformer" on 167.
[394] Robert DeMaria, Jr., "The Theory of Language in Johnson's Dictionary," in *Johnson after Two Hundred Years*, Paul J. Korshin, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 160.
[395] This comes from an unpaginated, unattributed note prefacing the Scolar Press reprint of Holder's *Elements*, which adds, "The *Elements of Speech* has a two-fold importance—as an attempt to describe scientifically the sounds of English, and as a manual of practical phonetics." William Holder, *Elements of Speech* (1669). A Scolar Press Facsimile. (Menston, England: Scolar Press, 1967).

(1653) as examples—the only English examples—of the "important empirical work in phonetics" done during this period.[396] In *A Short History of Linguistics* R. H. Robins calls Holder "perhaps the most successful" among those in a tradition belatedly called the "English school of phonetics." Holder, writes Robins, "came nearer than any other western scholar, before contact was made with Indian phonetic work, to a correct articulatory diagnosis of the voice-voiceless distinction in consonants."[397] Holder's emphasis on the physiology of speech grew out of a "Worthy Designe of giving Relief to a Deaf and Dumb Person. . . recommended to my Care."[398] Holder was a fellow of the Royal Society and later tutor to his young brother-in-law Christopher Wren, who wrote that Holder was "famed for his wonderful art, in making a young gentleman named Alexander Popham, who was born deaf and dumb, to speak."[399] After Popham lost his ability to speak again, John Wallis helped restore his speech, which led to a longstanding dispute print between Holder and Wallis over who could claim credit for Popham's success.[400] In Holder's treatise, "the Original" of letters "is found in *Viva voce*, in *spoken*

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[396] Pierre Swiggers, "History of Linguistics: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe," in *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, Vol. 3, ed. William Bright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 155.

[397] R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1990), 131-2. The term "the English school of phonetics," quoted here in Robins, comes from the title of a 1946 article by J. R. Firth. Robins notes that "the term *phonetics* is first recorded in the nineteenth century," and that from "the sixteenth to the eighteenth century work was carried on around phonetic questions under the titles of orthography and orthoepy." Ibid., 131.

[398] William Holder, "The Preface," in *Elements of Speech: An Essay of Inquiry into the Natural Production of Letter: with an Appendix concerning Persons Deaf & Dumb* (London, 1669); reprinted in *Elements of Speech and Discourse concerning Time*. (New York: AMS Press, 1975).

[399] R. W. Rieber and Jeffrey L. Wollock, "William Holder on Phonetics and Deafness: An Introduction to the New Edition of Elements of Speech," in *Elements of Speech and Discourse concerning Time*, op. cit., v.

[400] For brief accounts of the dispute, see Rieber and Wollock, "William Holder on Phonetics and Deafness," i-iii, and J. A. Kemp's Introduction to Wallis's *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* and *Tractatus De Loquela*. John Wallis, *Grammar of the English Language with an introductory grammatico-physical*; *Treatise on Speech (or on the formation of all speech sounds)*, trans. J. A. Kemp. (London: Longman, 1972 [1653]), 12-13. Kemp's edition includes a facsimile of Wallis's Latin text.

Language, and therefore tis *Speech* we now chiefly consider."[401] And after outlining the organs of speech, "the *Motions of the Mouth*…by which the voice is discriminated," and "the *Articulations* of the Breath or Voice in their passage from the *Larynx* through the Mouth or Nose," Holder describes how he taught his student using creative teaching props, showing his student the "posture" of the tongue in different articulatory positions by means of a "Palat with the upper jaw, of Plaster, and the shape of a Tong of stuffed Leather."[402] While scholars have pointed out the influence of Wallis on Johnson, especially on the "GRAMMAR" preceding the *Dictionary*, it is Holder's *Elements of Speech*, written in English, rather than Wallis's Latin *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*, that is cited throughout the *Dictionary*.[403]

In some ways, quotations from William Holder in the *Dictionary* demonstrate DeMaria's argument that "Johnson's practice as a lexicographer embodies the theory that it expresses in its illustrative quotations." As I argue in the previous chapter, DeMaria underestimates the extent to which passages are quoted to illustrate usage rather than serve a polemic or express a theory, but Johnson's frequent use of Holder in definitions relating to matters of language, especially the physical properties of consonants as they are articulated, when examined alongside Johnson's handling of linguistic corruptions in

[401] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 9.
[402] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 10-11, 136-37.
[403] Sledd and Kolb write that Wallis's contribution "to Johnson's section [in the 'GRAMMAR'] on 'etymology' is so large that modern readers would be happier if acknowledgments more adequate by modern standards had been made." Sledd and Kolb, *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*, 17. Sledd and Kolb later point out Johnson's independence of Wallis, writing that he "had the common sense to correct, in his grammar, the etymological extravagance of Wallis." Ibid., 40. For more information on what they call "Johnson's rather puzzling relationship to Wallis," they refer readers to a chapter on Johnson in H. G. Baker's unpublished dissertation, "The Contribution of John Wallis to the Methods and Materials of English Grammarians" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1937), which I have not yet consulted; see Sledd and Kolb, op. cit., 18.

his metatextual commentary, suggests that Holder's framework for describing the physiological properties of consonants and their articulation exerted some influence on Johnson's estimation of what types of letters were "kindred" and consequently his estimation of what kinds of "corruptions" were likely or not.

Aside from quotations under the entries for words like *language*, *vowel*, *consonant*, *speech*, and *communication*, Johnson quotes Holder under a variety of words of no particular linguistic import, as is the case with *inclusively*:

> All articulation is made within the mouth, from the throat to the lips *inclusively*; and is differenced partly by the organs used in it, and partly by the manner and degree of articulating. *Holder's Elements of Speech*.

As this quote shows, Holder is concerned with the organs, manner, and degree of articulating, and other entries supported with quotations from Holder in the *Dictionary* reveal how different Holder's 'theory of language' is from Locke's. Johnson includes several words from Holder's vocabulary of linguistic articulation and illustrates them with quotes from Holder.

> APPU'LSE.*n.s.* [*appulsus*, Lat.] The act of striking against any thing. <quote by *Harvey on Consumptions*>
>
> In vowels, the passage of the mouth is open and free, without any *appulse* of an organ of speech to another: but, in all consonants, there is an appulse of the organs. *Holder.*

> DE'NTAL.*adj*. [*dentalis*, Latin.]. . . 2. [In grammar.] Pronounced principally by the agency of the teeth.
>
> The Hebrews have assigned which letters are labial, which *dental*, and which guttural. *Bacon's Natural History, No. 198.*
>
> The *dental* consonants are easy, therefore let them be next; first the labio-*dentals*, as also the lingua-*dentals*. *Holder's Elem*.

> GI'NGIVAL.*adj*. [*gingiva*, Latin.] Belonging to the gums.
>
> Whilst the Italians strive to cut a thread in their pronunciation between D and T, so to sweeten it, they make the occluse appulse, especially the

gingival, softer than we do, giving a little of perviousness. *Holder's Elements of Speech*.

LA'BIAL.*adj*. [*labialis*, Latin.] Uttered by the lips.

The Hebrews have assigned which letters are *labial*, which dental, and which guttural. *Bacon's Natural History*.

Some particular affection of sound in its passage to the lips, will seem to make some composition in any vowel which is *labial*. *Holder's Elements of Speech*.

LA'BIODENTAL.*adj*. [*labium* and *dentalis*.] Formed or pronounced by the co-operation of the lips and teeth.

The dental consonants are very easy; and first the *labiodentals f*, *v*, also the linguadentals, *th*, *dh*.Holder ~~Elm. of Sp.~~

MUTE.*n.s*. 2. A letter which without a vowel can make no sound.

Grammarians note the easy pronunciation of a *mute* before a liquid, which doth not therefore necessarily make the preceding vowel long. *Holder's Elements of Speech*.

PA'LATICK.*adj*. [from *palate*.] Belonging to the palate; or roof of the mouth.

The three labials, P. B. M. are parallel to the three gingival T. D. N. and to the three *palatic* K.G. L.[404] *Holder*.

SPI'RITALLY.*adv*. [from *spiritus*, Lat.] By means of the breath.

Conceive one of each pronounced *spiritally*, the other vocally.*Holder's Elements of Speech.*

VOCA'LITY.*n.s*. [*vocalitas*, Lat. from *vocal*.] Power of utterance; quality of being utterable by the voice.

L and R being in extremes, one of roughness, the other of smoothness and freeness of *vocality*, are not easy in tract of vocal speech to be pronounced spiritally. *Holder*.

As the quote from Bacon's *Natural History* used both in *labial* and *dental* makes plain, Holder is not the first, nor the only, writer to use such terms.[405] John Wallis, John Wilkins

[404] The transcription of the quote from Holder seems to correct an error and produce an error. L is not a "palatic" in Holder's framework. The L seems to be a misprint for N$^{\hat{g}}$ (representing the "ng" sound in sing, or the velar nasal, in modern linguist's parlance), assuming that Johnson is quoting the following passage from p. 38 of Holder's *Elements*: "the 3 Labial B. P. M. are Parallel to the 3 *Gingival* T. D. N., and to the 3 Palatick K. G. N$^{\hat{g}}$." Given Holder's descriptions of consonants (see below), it makes more sense to list the labials as "P. B. M.," since P, T, and K are all "mutes" and "spiritals" in Holder's framework; B, D, and G are all "murmure-mute" and "vocal."

and others used similar vocabularies to describe English sounds, but in the *Dictionary* this vocabulary is associated more with Holder than anyone else.

The most interesting potential influence of Holder's work on Johnson's linguistic interpretations lies in his framework for describing the place and manner of articulation for consonants. This framework provides Johnson with access to a detailed, clearly laid out exposition of English consonants and their properties. With access to a scientifically described account of English sounds, Johnson would have principled reasons for estimating certain sound changes as likelier than others. Johnson could refer, even if just mentally and imperfectly, to Holder's account of English sounds when making his own conjectures about "gradual corruptions" that relied on assumptions, as in the case of the *jour* derivation, about what letters might be "easily confounded" for one another. An account such as Holder's would supplement Johnson's own observations about sound changes and about sound correspondences as he examined variations in spellings over time and space, changes from etymon to reflex, cognates in related languages, as well as "rustick" dialects and Scots. In the end, there is of course no way to determine the extent or the occasion of Holder's influence on Johnson's linguistic judgments, which were also influenced, I argue, by Johnson's own observations of sound correspondences in the data he encountered. In any case, Holder and the phonetic tradition he himself draws on are important contexts for Johnson's linguistic judgments, yet the role of this phonetic tradition has been ignored thus far in studies of the *Dictionary* and studies of Johnson's interpretation of language.

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[405] However, the OED (online) lists Holder as providing the first attribution of *gingival*, *labiodental*, *palatic* (in the original spelling), and *spiritally*.

Johnson makes no mention of Holder in his etymologies, and there is no indication that Johnson used Holder methodically or rigorously,[406] but it is not unlikely that when Johnson postulated certain corruptions he recalled the phonetic work of Holder or other members of the phonetic tradition that Holder represents, especially regarding consonants. As Johnson writes in the Preface, vowels are "so capriciously pronounced, and so differently modified, by accident or affectation, not only in every province, but in every mouth, that to them, as is well known to etymologists, little regard is to be shewn in the deduction of one language from another."[407] Consonants, on the other hand, are carefully compared, classified and tabulated in Holder's *Elements*.[408] In Holder's framework, consonants are described in terms of three qualities: the degree of oral cavity closure, the "organs of speech" used, and whether the consonants were voiceless (like p,

[406] For instance, Johnson does not generally use Holder's terminology for describing letters in his entry for the letter *n*, for which Holder uses the terms Naso-vocal and gingival. Johnson calls it a "semivowel," a term used (in Latin, i.e. "semi-vocalis") by Wallis, for instance, in his Grammar of English. Johnson may have been reluctant to tie his own terms to closely to any individual system. In his prefatory "GRAMMAR" Johnson refers to the different traditions from which he draws his own eclectic vocabulary: " In treating on the letters [in this "GRAMMAR"], I shall not, like some other grammarians, enquire into the original form as an antiquarian: nor into their formation and prolation by the organs of speech, as a mechanick, anatomist, or physiologist; nor into the properties and gradation of sounds, or the elegance or harshness of particular combinations, as a writer of universal and transcendental grammar. I consider the English alphabet only as it is English; and even in this narrow disquisition I follow the example of former grammarians, perhaps with more reverence than judgment." The mention of the "mechanick anatomist, or physiologist" who enquires into the formation and prolation of letters" may be a reference to Holder and John Wallis. Here I read Johnson as not rejecting these methods out of hand, but determining them as inappropriate to his purposes, given his audience. Such a qualifier allows Johnson not to be bound by any particular terminology, and may be intended to prevent being taken to task for inconsistencies in, or problems with, his terms to describe letters.

[407] Preface, para. 10.

[408] On the difference in describing consonants and vowels, Holder writes, "The *Articulations*, that is, the Motions and Postures of the Organs in framing the Vowels, are more difficultly discerned, than those of Consonants; because in the Consonants, the Appulse is more manifest to the sense of Touching, but in the Vowels it is so hard to discern the Figures made by the Motions of the Tongue, (inclining onely toward the Palat, and not touching it) especially about the more inward Bosse or convex of it, that it is rendred no less difficult to define the Articulations of the Vowels; and he that can describe them accurately, *erit mihi magnus Apollo*." Holder goes on with his own highly qualified attempt at explaining vowels, noting, "Onely he who shall adventure has this advantage, that it is easier to affirm, than to disprove." *Elements of Speech*, 82-83.

t, k, f) or voiced (like b, d, g, v). First, consonants are "occluse" or "pervious." "Occluse" consonants are those made by "close appulse," whereby "all passage of Breath or voice through the mouth" was precluded, whereas consonants made by "pervious appulse" consonants gave breath and voice "some passage out of the mouth."[409] Second, Holder differentiates consonants on the basis of what "organs of speech" (tongue, palate, "goums," jaw, teeth, lips) are used in articulation.[410] Third, Holder distinguishes consonants by "sound;" consonants varied in terms of the "Articulation of Breath" and the "Articulation of Voice," depending on whether or not the the larynx was activated in producing a letter (as in the voiced or "vocal" consonants b, d, g, rather than the voiceless or "spirital' consonants p, t, and k), and whether or not the voice "hath a free passage through the Nose" (as in the case of nasals or "naso-vocals" n, m, and ng).[411] Holder describes how appulse, organ, and sound can distinguish consonants from one another and reveal their similarities at the same time:

> If a close Appulse be made by the Lips, *viz.* by the Under-Lip, to the Upper-Lip, then is framed P, or B, or M; if it be made by the end of the Tongue to the Goums, T. or. D. or N. If by the Bosse of the Tongue to the Palate, near the Throat, then K. or G. or N$^{\hat{g}}$. So there are 9 Consonants made by *close Appulse*, and they evidently answer one another in their Properties; whether you compare them in *respect of the Organs*, the 3 Labial P. B. M. are Parallel to the *Gingival* T. D. N, and to the 3 Palatick K. G. N$^{\hat{g}}$; or whether in *respect of Sound*; P. T. K. are Articulations of Breath; B. D. G. (if you compare B to P; D to T; and G to K;) are made with the very same Appulse and Motion of the Organ; and are differenced onely by being Articulations of Voice, or Breath vocalized: which is easily discerned, if you strive to pronounce P. abstracted without a Vowel, then it will be wholly *Mute*, because it is nothing but Breath stopt: but if you in the same manner go to pronounce B, there will be a *murmuring* sound of the Voice, formed in the *Larynx*, and passing till it be stopt by the Appulse of the Lips.[412]

[409] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 36.
[410] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 25.
[411] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 32.
[412] Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 37-39.

Holder summarizes these and other distinctions in a table of the consonants. Holder has two columns for sound—"Sound" and "Sound or MATTER."

	SOUND	ORGAN		Or thus more properly by Sound or MATTER
	P. Mute	Labial	p.	Spirital.
	B. Murmure-mute	Labial	b.	Vocal or Murmurant.
	M. Naso-vocal	Labial	m.	Naso-vocal.
Close	T. Mute	Gingival	t.	Spirital.
Appulse	D. Murm-mute	Gingival	d.	Vocal.
	N. Naso-vocal	Gingival	n.	Naso-vocal.
	K. Mute	Palatic	k.	Spirital.
	G. Murm-mute	Palatic	g.	Vocal
	Ng. Naso-vocal	Palatic	y.[413]	Naso-vocal.
	F. Blæse	Labiodental	f.	Spirital.
	V. Murm-Blæse	Labiodental	v.	Vocal.
	Th. Blæse	Lingua-dental	θ	Spirital.
Pervious	Dh. Murmur- Blæse	Lingua-dental	ϑ	Vocal.
Appulse	S. Sibilant.	Gingival	s.	Spirital.
	Z. Murm-Sibilant	Gingival	z.	Vocal.
	Sh. Sibilant	Palatic	sh.	Spirital.
	Zh. Murm-Sibilant	Palatic	j.zh.	Vocal.
	L. Semi-voc.smooth	Gingival	l.	Vocal-lateral.
	R Semi-voc.jarring	Gingival	r.	Vocal-jarring.

FIG. 1. Modified from William Holder, *Elements of Speech*, p. 53, sig. E3r.

Holder also includes another chart, or "Scheme," that makes apparent the differences and affinities of the various "letters," and rejects letters deemed to hard to pronounce easily :

	Articulations	Spirital	Vocal	Naso-Spirital	Naso-vocal
Close	Labial	P	B	†M	M
(Occluse)	Gingival	T	D	†N	N
Appulse	Palatick	K	G	†Ng	Ng
	Labiadental	F	V	†F	†V
	Linguadental	Th	Dh	†Th	†Dh
Pervious	Gingival-Sibilant	S	Z	†S	†Z
Appulse	Palatick-Sibilant	Sh	Zh	†Sh	†Zh
	Gingival-Free	†L	L	†L	†L
	Gingival-jarring	†R	R	†R	†R

[413] The ERRATA listed at the beginning of the text notes that there "was intended a Character for Ng, viz. n with a tail like that of g. which must be understood where the Printer has imitated it by n or y."

FIGURE 2. Adapted from William Holder, *Elements of Speech*, p. 62, sig. E7v.[414]

Given Johnson's probable knowledge of these tables and Holder's general framework, it is possible to say that his comments on language changes, particularly of corruptions, are informed, at least loosely, by Holder's strikingly modern account of English "letters" and his own cumulative observations of variation in English and among cognate words.

Johnson adds a comment on corruption to the revised entry for *cockloft*, reanalyzing both the etymology and the rationale for it.

> CO'CKLOFT. n.s. [*cock* and *loft*.] The room over the garret, in which fowls are supposed to roost, unless it be rather corrupted from *coploft*, the *cop* or *top* of the house.
>
> If the lowest floors already burn,
> *Cocklofts* and garrets soon will take their turn. *Dryd. Juv*.
>
> My garrets, or rather my *cocklofts* indeed, are very indifferently furnished; but they are rooms to lay lumber in. *Swift*.

[414] Holder's daggers, or obelisks, lie on their sides in his text, but I display them vertically here. For Holder the obelisks are "intended for marks of rejection of those Letters, to which they are prefixed"; Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 60-61. Holder rejects "Naso-vocals" because they "are not easie or graceful to pronounce." Holder rejects "Naso-Spiritals" "for the same reason. . . . [B]eing found harsh and troublesome, they are more generally disused, whilst most Nations rather study to sweeten and soften their Pronunciation, and to that end are more ready to change or leave out in their Compositions of words, and Conjugations, and words, borrowed from other Languages, such Letters, as less suit with *ease* of Pronunciation." Holder also rejects "spirital" L and R because "in attempting to pronounce these two Consonants, as likewise the *Nasals*, and some of the vowels *Spiritally*, the Throat is brought to labour, and it makes that which we call a *Guttural* pronunciation." The ostensibly normative tone of Holder's rejections here is partly defensive, since his scheme would be theoretically neater without all of the blank spaces in his table brought about by his rejections. Holder adds of the consonants that survive his obelisks, "And if they do not all go in equal and parallel Combinations you see the Reason of it. . . .And I, not being able to know the distinct usages in all Languages, do not hold my self obliged by the design of this Essay, to accomodate an Alphabet to [all languages]. . . ; "leaving it to every ones pleasure, upon their experience of forrein usages, to select out of this common stock more Letters than I do, and remove the *Obelisks*," *Elements of Speech*, 56-60. Holder does not include in either of these tables *h*; nor does he include what modern linguists would call affricates, the "ch" and "j" sounds in "*ch*eer" and "*j*eer" respectively. Regarding *h*, Holder writes, "I have hitherto had no occasion to speak of H, since that H is onely a *Guttural Aspiration*, *i.e.* a more forcible impulse of Breath from the Lungs, applyed when we please, before or after other Letters" (67). Holder considers the "ch" and "j consonant" sounds not to be "simple" letters but rather "compounds" respectively of "T. and Sh. or at least T. and :Y." and of "D and Zh, or D and Y. In WHAT, WHICH, and the like, H is pronounced before W" (72). Holder also calls Y and W "vowel consonants" on 141-42.

Johnson's earlier etymology, analyzing *cockloft* as a fairly transparent compound, leads Johnson to explain its presumptively primitive meaning, 'the loft where the cocks roost,' presumably the more primitive literal meaning which came later to mean "the room over the garret." Johnson later proposes that the word is a compound, but one whose origin is obscured by processes of corruption, the change from *p* to *ck*. This comment is more comprehensible, and seems less arbitrary, when one reads across entries, in this case by consulting his definitions for *cop*. When we do, we find that *cop* is defined as "the top of anything," and that Johnson judges *cock* a "vulgar" or "common" variation of *cop*.

> COP.n.s. [*kop*, Dut. *cop*, Sax.] The head; the top of any thing; any thing rising to a head. As a *cop*, vulgarly *cock* of hay; a *cob-castle*, properly *cop-castle*, a small castle or house on a hill. A *cob* of cherrystones for *cop*, a pile of stones one laid upon another; a tuft on the head of birds.

In addition, the tenth sense of the noun *cock* is listed as a variant of the preferred *cop* when one means a "small heap of hay." Johnson's reanalysis of the etymology for *cockloft*, then, seems based on Johnson's observation that (or assumption that) *ck*, or at least the sound it makes is substituted for *p* when *cock* means a "heap of hay." Thus Johnson's observations on what is "vulgarly" or "improperly" done to *cop* (*cock* is used for *cop*, which draws the word away from the form of its presumed etymon, Saxon *cop*) provides the evidentiary basis for Johnson's conjectural corruption in the entry for *cockloft*. If *p* becomes *ck* to produce "cock of hay" *p* may have been corrupted *ck* in *cockloft*. Johnson also conjectures a variation between *ck* and *p* in the entry for *mop*:

> MOP. *n.s*. 2.[Perhaps corrupted from *mock*.] A wry mouth made in contempt.
> Each one, tripping on his toe,
> Will be here with *mop* and mow. *Shakesp. Tempest*.

Johnson's conjectural derivation here of course relies in part on his interpretation of the text and its context. But the variation between *ck* and *p* has precedent in Johnson's observations of language changes and is understandable even from the view of Holder's framework. P and K are both voiceless stops, or in Holder's terms spirital and occluse. P, T, and K, as spirital occluse consonants are described as a unit "parallel" to B, D, and G, and M, N, and Ng (see above) in Holder's terms. P, a labial, and K, a palatick, differ only in place of articulation. Johnson adds another note to the revised edition, assuming a corruption from *p* to *k* (here spelled *c*) in the entries for *clump* and *plump*:

> CLUMP.n.s. [formed from *lump*.] 1. A shapeless piece of wood, or other matter, nearly equal in its dimensions.
> 2. A cluster of trees; a tuft of trees or shrubs: anciently a *plump*.
>
> PLUMP. n.s. [from the adjective.] A knot; a tuft; a cluster; a number joined in one mass. I believe it is now corrupted to *clump*.
>
> England, Scotland, Ireland lie all in a *plump* together, not accessible but by sea. *Bacon*.
>
> Warwick having espied certain *plumps* of Scottish horsemen ranging the field, returned towards the arriere to prevent danger.
> *Hayward*.
>
> We rested under a *plump* of trees. *Sandys*.
>
> Spread upon a lake, with upward eye
> A *plump* of fowl behold their foe on high;
> They close their trembling troop, and all attend
> On whom the sowsing eagle will descend. *Dryden*.

Johnson's belated assumption that *plump* and *clump* are related forms, again, is supported by their presumed semantic similarities, but also by the assumption that *p* and the sound represented variously as *k*, *ck*, or *c* can reasonably be related. Holder's framework provides principled reasons for conjecturing such a relation. Just as importantly, the evidence Johnson encounters in various entries supports such a connection.

If we look at other corruptions in the *Dictionary* involving corruptions from *p* or *k* into other forms, the corrupted forms are often consistent with Holder's framework. Johnson describes corruptions from *p* to *b* (occluse labials differed only by voice) in the entries for *cob*, *to grabble*, and *pickback* and from *b* to *p* in *peacock*, *to plump* v.n., and *plump* adv.:

> COB. A word often used in the composition of low terms; corrupted from *cop*, Sax. *kopf*, Germ. the head or top.
>
> To GRA'BBLE. v.n. [probably corrupted from *grapple*.]To grope; . . . <*Arbuthnot*. . . >
>
> PI'CKBACK. adj. [corrupted perhaps from *pickpack*.] On the back.
> As our modern wits behold,
> Mounted a *pickback* on the old,
> Much farther off. *Hudibras*.
>
> PEA'COCK. n.s. [*pawa*, Saxon, *pavo*, Lat.┼Of this word the etymology is not known: perhaps it is *peak cock*, from the tuft of feathers on its head; the peak of women being an ancient ornament: if it be not rather a corruption of *beaucoq*, Fr. from the more striking lustre of its spangled train.] A fowl eminent for the beauty of his feathers, and particularly of his tail. <4 quotes>
>
> To PLUMP.v.n. [from the adverb.] 1. To fall like a stone into the water. A word formed from the sound, or rather corrupted from *plumb*.
> 2. [From the adjective.] To be swollen. *Ainsworth*.[415]
> PLUMP. adv. [Probably corrupted from *plumb*, or perhaps formed from the sound of a stone falling on the water.] With a sudden fall.
> I would fain now see 'em rowl'd
> Down a hill, or from a bridge
> Head-long cast, to break their ridge;
> Or to some river take 'em
> *Plump*, and see if that would wake 'em. *Ben. Johnson*.
> Fluttering his pennons vain *plump* down he drops. *Milt*.

Johnson describes corruptions from *p* to *t* (occluse spiritals) in *gantlet* and *potgun* and *t* to *p* in *to sprain*:

[415] These two significations are listed in reverse order in 1755.

GA'NTLET. n.s. [*gantlet* is only corrupted from *gantelope*, *gant*, all; and *loopen*, to run, Dutch.] A military punishment, in which the criminal running between the ranks receives a lash from each man. *Dryden's Juv*.; *Locke*.

PO'TGUN. n.s. [by mistake or corruption used for *popgun*.] A gun which makes a small smart noise.

> An author, thus who pants for fame,
> Begins the world with fear and shame,
> When first in print, you see him dread
> Each *potgun* levell'd at his head. *Swift's Miscel*.

To SPRAIN. v.a. [Corrupted from *strain*.] To stretch the ligaments of a joint without dislocation of the bone. *Gay*.

Johnson notes corruptions from *k* to *g* (both occluse palaticks) in *gun* and *huggermugger* (as we have already seen), as well as *to haggle* and *muggy/muggish*:

To HA'GGLE. v.a. [corrupted from *hackle* or *hack*.] To cut; to chop; to mangle: always in a bad sense.

> Suffolk first died, and York all *haggled* o'er
> Comes to him where in gore he lay insteep'd. *Shakespeare. H. V.*

MU'GGY/MU'GGISH. n.s. <1755:> [A cant word.] <1773:> [corrupted from *mucky*, for *damp*.] Moist; damp; mouldy.

> Cover with stones, or muggy straw, to keep it moist. *Mortimer's Husbandry*.

SHOG. n.s. [from *shock*.] Violent concussion. *Dryden*; *Bentley*.

Johnson notes a "supposed" corruption from *k* to *t* (both occluse spiritals) in the entry for *to smatter*:

To SMA'TTER. v.n. [It is supposed to be corrupted from *smack* or *taste*.] 1. To have a slight taste; to have a slight, superficial, and imperfect knowledge. *Watts*.; *Bentley*. 2. To talk superficially or ignorantly. *Hudibras*.; *Swift*.

These observations on corruptions do not by necessity rely on Holder's framework—grammarians had observed, for instance, the close kinship between *p* and *b* for centuries. Yet the changes from *p* to *b*, *p* to *k*, *p* to *t*, *k* to *g*, *k* to *t*, and vice versa are all changes

between letters that are all occluse appulse consonants, and the change only requires an alteration in voicing (e.g., from spirital to vocal) or an alteration in the place of articulation (e.g., gingival to palatal), and such posited changes are consistent with Holder's framework.

	Articulations	Spirital	Vocal
Close	Labial	P	B
(Occluse)	Gingival	T	
Appulse	Palatick	K	G

FIG. 3. Adapted from Holder, *Elements of Speech*, 62.

Johnson also notes corruptions from *k* to the "tch" sound (i.e. the voiceless affricate sound in *rich*, and *stitch*) in the entries for *reechy*, *smatch*, and *wretchless* and from "tch" to *k* in *nick*:

> REE'CHY. adj. [from *reech*, corruptly formed from *reek*.] Smoky; sooty; tanned.
> Let him, for a pair of *reechy* kisses,
> Make you to ravel all this matter out. *Shakesp. Hamlet*.
> The kitchen malkin pins
> Her richest lockram 'bout her *reechy* neck. *Shakesp*.
>
> SMATCH. n.s. [corrupted from *smack*.] 1. Taste; tincture; twang.
> Thou art a fellow of a good respect;
> Thy life hath had some *smatch* of honour in't. *Shakespeare*.
> Some nations have a peculiar guttural or nasal *smatch* in their language. *Holder's Elements of Speech.*
> These salts have somewhat of a nitrons taste, but mixt with a smatch of a vitriolick. *Grew*.
> 2. [*Cæruleo*, Latin.] A bird. <no quote>
>
> WRE'TCHLESS. adj. [This is, by I know not whose corruption, written for *reckless*.] Careless; mindless; heedless.
> For any man to put off his present repentance, on contemplation of a possibility that his latter repentance may serve the turn, is the most *wretchless* presumption, and hath no promise of mercy annexed to it. *Hammond*.
> If persons of so circumspect a piety have been thus overtaken, what security can there be for our *wretchless* oscitancy? *Government of the Tongue*.

> NICK. n.s. [*nicke*, Teutonick, the twinkling of an eye.] . . .
> 2. A notch cut in any thing. [Corrupted from *nock* or *notch*.][416]

While Holder leaves the "tch" sound out of his tables and his scheme, he does so because that scheme only includes what he considers to be "simple" letters, the irreducible "elements" of speech. Holder considers "*Ch* (as we pronounce it)" to be a compound of *k*'s kindred letter *t* and "*Sh*. or at least" a compound of t and y.[417] Whether or not Johnson had Holder in mind when noting these last corruptions, Holder's framework, and the physical relations among letters therein, would have only supplemented evidence for a correspondence between *k* and "tch" as he considers lexical data throughout the *Dictionary*. The entry for *arch* shows Johnson noting an alternation between these two sounds depending on what consonant follows:

> ARCH, in composition, signifies chief, or of the first class, . . .as, *archangel*, *archbishop*. It is pronounced variously with regard to the *ch*, which before a consonant sound as in *cheese*, as *archdeacon*; before a vowel like *k*, as *archangel*.

Johnson's observations of such variations in language, in the end, are not fully attributable to, or reliant on, any single scheme. Johnson's understanding of language change and his application of that understanding in his comments on "corruptions" rely on a variety of variety of linguistic and philological traditions, including Locke's psychology of mind, early modern textual studies and lexicography, and Holder's phonetics. Johnson's developing ideas on language change are also attributable to his tendency to synthesize the vocabularies of these different traditions and to synthesize his accumulated observations on language change as he progressed through the alphabet. He

[416] No quote illustrates this signification. Two more significations follow the second one.
[417] Holder, *The Elements of Speech*, 72.

never fully synthesized these observations in any single, comprehensive statement, but in his various comments on corruption throughout the *Dictionary* we see instantiations of those views as they take shape.

Epilogue

The subtitle of this work, "Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* in Its Contexts," suggests a comprehensive or complete treatment of the *Dictionary*'s contexts, but of course this study has not exhausted the contexts within which it is possible or desirable to understand the *Dictionary*. Yet it does examine, more explicitly than any other study, the grounds for our understanding of Johnson as a linguistic thinker. Johnson was no linguist, but he applied his own best understanding of language and its processes of change to the interpretive tasks of lexicography and textual criticism. So even if Johnson was not so much a linguist as he was a philologer, his presumed attitudes toward language have long helped shape the modern linguist's understanding of, and approach to, language by exemplifying naïve, outmoded, even pre-modern attitudes toward language.

Johnson died just two years before William Jones delivered his famous paper to the Royal Asiatic Society, declaring that Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, "Gothic," and "Celtic," must have "sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists."[418] Jones's paper has long been considered at least the symbolic origin of a type of historical and comparativist linguistic study that postdates Johnson—a kind of language-study that is rigorous and theoretically principled. While Johnson is generally considered as pre-linguistic, this study argues that Johnson is a linguist in his own right, however constrained he is by his own times.

* * * * * *

[418] Quoted in R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1990), p. 149.

Many misreadings of the *Dictionary* occur because scholars often consult the Preface alone. But even once we consult the *Dictionary*, we are apt to misread it because the text is only readable in chunks, and because the reading conventions we bring to the *Dictionary* prepare us to read it in ways that obscure Johnson's methods and his aims. Thus another significant consequence of this study is that it points out the flexible structure and often integral nature of Johnson's entries, offering a new way to them; moreover, it provides evidence to show that, when analyzing language, Johnson draws on the kinds of cross-entry connections he encourages his readers to make, "examining all the words of the same race" in "any case of doubt or difficulty," and considering data from various entries, since "all [words] will be better understood, as they are considered in greater variety of structure and relations" (Preface, para. 53).

In showing how what I have called the metatextual and textual components of Johnson's entries interrelate, this study provides replicable interpretive strategies for future students of the *Dictionary*, and offers a novel, substantive reconstruction of Johnson's philological methods and logic. Moreover, it points out how plucking portions of Johnson's metatext from his entries can and does detract from studies of the *Dictionary*. In her recent study, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing*, Janet Sorenson writes in her chapter on Johnson that he attempts "to stop illegitimate reproduction and circulation [of words], drawing on Johnson's use of metaphors of childbirth and the language of legitimacy in the *Plan* ("low terms" are "the spawn of folly or affectation, …and of which therefore no legitimate derivation can be

shewn")[419] For Sorenson, Johnson's comments on "low" words, "cant," "Scots usage," "corruption," and his frequent comment on the fact that a word has an "uncertain etymology" are all disparaging labels, "meant to limit or curtail the usage of these suspect words and prevent their further reproduction." Thus

> Johnson disparagingly labels words such as "budge" and "cajole" as "low" and "cant." In addition, the *Dictionary* warns that "bamboozle" is "a cant word not used in pure or grave writings" and that "agog" is "a word of uncertain etymology." Johnson also writes of "bandog" (a mastiff) "the original of this word is very doubtful." He writes of the word "bantling" (a young child) "if it has any etymology, it is corrupted from the old word 'bairn,' a little child, a low word," and, we might add, a Scots word.[420]

In Sorenson's reading, the phrase "a word of uncertain etymology," juxtaposed with the terms "cant" and "low" becomes a warning label, as do the comments on corruption and Scots. Yet a look at the full entry for *agog*, or even a look at the full etymology in itself, does not support Sorenson's reading of the comment on "uncertain etymology" as a warning label. It shows, rather, Johnson using the comment to qualify the evidence he lays out along with his own conjectural etymology. Moreover, Johnson provides readers with details about how *agog* is used (it "has the particles *on*, or *for*, before the object of desire") in ways that seem to facilitate rather than discourage the use of *agog*:

> AGO'G. *adv*.[a word of uncertain etymology; the French have the term *à gogo*, in low language; as, *ils vivent à gogo*, they live to their wish: from this phrase our word may be, perhaps, derived.] 1. In a state of desire; in a state of warm imagination; heated with the notion of some enjoyment; longing; strongly excited.
>
> > As for the sense and reason of it, that has little or nothing to do here; only let it sound full and round, and chime right to the humour, which is at present *agog*, (just as a big, long, rattling name is said to command even adoration from a Spaniard) and, no doubt, with this powerful, senseless

[419] *Plan*, para. 29.
[420] Janet Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79.

engine, the rabble-driver, shall be able to carry all before him.
South's Sermons.

2. It is used with the verbs *to be*, or *to set*; as, he *is agog*, or you may *set* him *agog*.

The gawdy gossip, when she's set *agog*,
In jewels drest, and at each ear a bob,
Goes slaunting out, and, in her trim of pride,
Thinks all she says or does, is justify'd. *Dryd. Juv. Sat. 6*.

This maggot has no sooner set him *agog*, but he gets him a ship, freights her, builds castles in the air, and conceits both the Indies in his coffers. *L'Estrange*.

3. It has the particles *on*, or *for*, before the object of desire.

On which the saints are all *agog*,
And all this for a bear and dog. *Hudibras, cant. ii.*

Gypsies generally straggle into these parts, and set the heads of our servant-maids so *agog for* husbands, that we do not expect to have any business done as it should be, whilst they are in the country.
Addison. Spectator.

Sorenson's reading does not account for the possibility that by describing *agog* as "a word of uncertain etymology" Johnson is merely admitting what must be admitted: the etymology is, in fact, uncertain.

For Sorenson, this term is instead a "label," a term which itself suggests that Johnson is branding the word rather than admitting ignorance. But the term "of uncertain etymology," in itself, is no condemnation of a word. Johnson says the same thing of several other words. For instance, the word *anger* is "of no certain etymology"; *bachelor* is "a word of very uncertain etymology, it not being well known what was its original sense"; the etymology of *baron* is "very uncertain"; *to struggle* is "of uncertain etymology." *Stubborn* is also a word "of which no obvious etymology appears," yet Johnson, after offering possible derivations from Minshew, Junius, and Edward Lye, lists five senses of the word illustrated by ten quotations from authors of no mean reputation: Shakespeare, Spenser, and Dryden. Again, nothing in the entry suggests that Johnson is

trying to discourage the use of "stubborn" because its etymology is unclear. There is apparently even a right and wrong way, or at least a common and uncommon way, to use *stubborn*. Having written in the first edition that *stubborn*, in "all its uses it commonly implies something of a bad quality," Johnson adds in the fourth edition, "though Locke has catachrestically used it in a sense of praise."[421] It would seem unusual for Johnson to warn readers against using a word like *struggle* while noting his impressions of its proper use.

It is true that Johnson determines that presumed French etymon, "the term *à gogo*," occurs "in low language." But even a word with presumably low origins can rise above the fortunes of its pedigree in the *Dictionary*. *Gratitude*, for instance, comes from "low Latin," along with several other words Johnson describes as perhaps having a "low Latin" pedigree: *commission*, *destructive*, *fee*, *homage*, *manor*, *map*, *marriage*, *moat*, *to preserve*, *secretary*, *soldier*, and *temporal*. It is also true that two of the authors used to illustrate *agog*, Samuel Butler (by means of his satire *Hudibras*) and Sir Roger L'Estrange (especially by means of his translation of Aesop's *Fables*), are relatively frequent suppliers to the *Dictionary* of terms Johnson labels as low. *Hudibras* is quoted in two other entries marked, as Sorenson points out, as "low" terms: *cajole* and *budge*; is quoted along with Shakespeare under *to budge*; *Hudibras* and L'Estrange provide the

[421] Johnson includes the following definitions for *catachresis* and *catachrestical*; the passage from "Smith's Rhetorick" serves as the definition for *catachresis*:
CATACHRE'SIS.n.s. . . ;It is, in rhetorick, the abuse of a trope, when the words are too far wrested from their native signification, or when one word is abusively put for another, for want of the proper word; as, a voice beautiful to the ear. *Smith's Rhetorick*.
CATACHRE'STICAL. adj. [from *catachresis*.] Contrary to proper use; forced; far fetched. A *catachrestical* and far derived similitude it holds with men, that is, in a bifurcation. *Brown's Vulgar Errours*.

only illustrations for the verb *to cajole* until he adds a quote from Rymer in the fourth edition. In addition, *Hudibras* and L'Estrange both illustrate, along with Shakespeare, usage of the verb *to fadge*, which is "a mean word not now used, unless perhaps in ludicrous and low compositions." Johnson illustrates the noun *squelch*, a "low and ludicrous" word meaning "a heavy fall," with quotes from *Hudibras* and L'Estrange alone. The verb *to imbrangle* ("to intangle") is illustrated by *Hudibras* alone; the adverb *squab* ("with a heavy sudden fall; plump and fat") with L'Estrange alone. *Hudibras*, L'Estrange's *Fables*, and other works, such as John Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull* (which provides the illustrative quote for that "cant word not used in pure or grave writings," *bamboozle*) are quoted throughout the *Dictionary*, and these informal, often "ludicrous" (i.e. as Johnson defines it, "burlesque; merry; sportive; exciting laughter") works are not "grave" or "pure," thus they often contain words more commonly used in informal, "low" contexts. Sorenson seems to read Johnson's phrase "not used" as "not to be used" or "not now used, nor ought it ever be used," taking Johnson's estimation of the contexts within which *bamboozle* is actually used and reading it as an injunction meant to "limit or curtail the usage of these suspect words and prevent their further reproduction."[422]

Yet however one reads Johnson's "labels" (a slightly loaded term itself), they always operate, and should be read, in the larger context of the entry. It is easy to imagine that readers might not want to use *bamboozle*, once an authoritative dictionary like Johnson's seems to exclude its use from "pure or grave writings." But Sorenson is not

[422] Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire*, 79.

merely referring to the various ways that readers might respond to, or interpret, Johnson's comments on words—a kind of variety that is enabled by Johnson's wording—she is characterizing Johnson's aims and intentions. Every one of Sorenson's "labels" ("of uncertain etymology," "low," "cant," "Scots," "corrupted"), as this dissertation has shown, make room for other readings, and other assumptions about Johnson's intentions, than the one she provides. My own contextualized reading in Chapter 2 of Johnson's comments on Scots, for instance, radically departs from Sorenson's (and James Basker's) reading of them, regardless of their context, as "warning labels."[423]

Other words mentioned by Sorenson among those words of uncertain etymology, *bandog* and *bantling*, illustrate the way Johnson's entries may be read fruitfully in the context of other entries. Johnson does write that the "original of this word is very doubtful," but as I point out in Chapter 2, Johnson uses the metatextual space, set off by brackets, in the entry to construct his own notions of the word's etymology in order to support his own estimation that *bandog* means "a kind of large dog."

> [from *ban* or *band*, and *dog*. The original of this word is very doubtful. *Caius*, *De Canibus Britannicis*,[424] derives it from *band*, that is, *a dog chained up*. *Skinner* inclines to deduce it from *bana*, a *murderer*. May it not come from *ban* a *curse*, as we say a *curst cur*; or rather from *baund*, swelled or large, a *Danish* word; from whence, in some counties they call a great nut a *ban-nut*.]

If the etymology is uncertain, Johnson does his best to derive one, and his methods here, as I hope this dissertation suggests, demonstrate the ways in which his philological

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[423] "Johnson did include some Scots words in his *Dictionary*. . . . Any Scots words which he did include receive 'warning labels' such as 'confined to Scotland' or 'still retained in Scotland.' . . . . By labeling Scots words with derogatory phrases, eliminating his assistants' information regarding Scottish usage, and banning most Scots terms, Johnson both exoticizes and represses Scots." Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 91. For my own interpretation of such phrases, see Chapter 2.

[424] 1755: *Caius, de canibus Britannicis*

observations in one entry are informed by observations made in other entries (the entries for *ban*, *to ban*, *band*, *to band*, *bane* (the lexical descendant of *bana*), as well as his observations made in cognate languages ("a *Danish* word"), observations made on analogous uses in oral language ("as we say a *curst cur*"), and in the language of the "counties" not otherwise included or defined in the *Dictionary* (*ban-nut*: "in some counties they call a great nut a *ban-nut*")[425] As I argue in Chapter 3, Johnson often lays out for the reader competing etymologies of a word, with the evidence for each. Johnson's conjecture that Danish *baund* is a source for, or at least cognate of, the word provides the best etymological fit with his definition, "a kind of large dog." Even if the comment on *bandog*'s "original" were intended as a kind of disparaging label, reading that comment out of context skews the passage and misses its potential relevance for understanding Johnson's philological methods.

As I argue in Chapter 2, Johnson invites readers in the Preface to "examine words of the same race" in "any case of doubt or difficulty" (para. 53). And in the doubtful case of *bandog*'s etymology Johnson makes his own tentative conclusions based on evidence from words that he considers to be related (*ban* as "curse," the Danish word *baund*, the use of *ban* in the compound "*ban-nut*") and places that evidence alongside the evidence of Caius and Skinner. If we are ready to see how the various elements of Johnson's entries work together, and if we are prepared to read Johnson's entries not as discrete and isolated members of a *discourse colony* (as McDermott and Walsh suggest) Johnson's philological methods and logic will be more clear. In the case of *bandog*, that would

[425] Johnson neither includes an entry for *ban-nut* nor includes any signification under *ban* semantically related to the notions "swelled," "large," or "great."

involve treating the etymology as a kind of hypertext that invites readers to consult the entries for words Johnson describes as being related to *bandog*. Often these related words can serve as hypertextual links to other entries, and are made conspicuous by their orthographic similarity to the headword, not to mention their italicized font, as is the case with *ban* and *band*. A little more ingenuity, but not much effort, is required to locate the implied link, *bane*, via its "Saxon" parent "*bana*, murderer": *ban* appears on the left-hand side of the book, *bane* on the right-hand.

The reader who wishes to follow links among entries can do so easily enough, whether consulting an original edition of the folio or the CD-ROM version. Other links, for instance the one Johnson makes to Danish *baund*, are extra-textual, and would require reference to texts other than the *Dictionary* for confirmation or comparison, but many of the links are intra-textual (like *ban*, *band*, and *bane*) and provide substantial evidence, on their own, for the kinds of connections that inform Johnson's philological judgments. This kind of cross-entry reading is partly the cost of Johnson's choice to order the entries alphabetically, instead of the method used by the French Academy, which found it "agreeable & instructif de dispose le Dictionnaire par Racines" (agreeable and instructive to arrange the Dictionary according to Roots). In Johnson's alphabetically organized text, one must trace these connections by pursuing the links suggested by Johnson's metatextual commentary.

A little more effort is required to follow the links in the metatext for the "low word" *bantling*, in which Johnson offers another one of his conjectural etymologies involving corruption:

> BA'NTLING.n.s. [if it has any etymology, it is perhaps corrupted from the old word *bairn*, *bairnling*, a little child.] A little child: a low word.
>
> If the object of their love
> Chance by Lucina's aid to prove,
> They seldom let the *bantling* roar,
> In basket, at a neighbour's door. *Prior*.

We do not find an entry for *bairn*, but there is an entry for *ling*, a "termination" that often signifies "diminution":

> LING. The termination notes commonly diminution; as, kit*ling*, and is derived from *klein*, German, *little*; sometimes a quality; as, first*ling*, in which sense *Skinner* deduces it from *langen*, old Teutonick, to belong.

Johnson's proposed etymology, then, involves analyzing *bantling* as a compound of the unknown commodity, *bant*, with the known commodity *ling*, which operates as a termination in other entries (though there is no entry for *kitling*, for some reason): *duckling*, *firstling*, *fondling*, *foundling*, *nursling*, *weakling*, and even *dumpling*:

> DU'MPLING.n.s. [from *dump*, heaviness.] A sort of pudding.
>
> ~~You prate too long, like a book-learn'd sot,~~
> ~~'Till~~ pudding and *dumpling* burn to pot. *Dryden*.

In Johnson's entry for *bantling* it is easy to read contempt into Johnson's phrase "if it has any etymology," and *bantling*—with its confluence of presumed lowness, doubtful etymology, potential origins in the "corruptions of oral utterance" (Preface, para. 16), and its Scottish associations—displays several features traditionally regarded as Johnsonian-induced stigmata. Certainly, given all of those factors, and the widespread presumption that Johnson hated Scots, no reader could be faulted for presuming that Johnson advises them to use *bantling* with caution, if at all.

But Johnson is not just stigmatizing this word; he is offering a conjectural etymology as he often does when he lacks textual evidence, by presuming a corruption

and by drawing on oral language "old" language or Scots to make his philological judgments. With *ling* accounted for, Johnson tries to account for *bant*, presuming that it contains meaning in itself. Yet he lacks of any attestable meaning for *bant*. *Banter*, whose orthography might suggest a relation, is semantically unrelated and reveals no etymological evidence that would clarify the meaning of *bant*; it is a "barbarous word, without etymology, unless it be derived from *badiner*, Fr." *Pant*, though not far removed phonetically, is far removed semantically. Resorting to conjecture about corruptions, Johnson looks for words semantically related to *bant* from which *bant* might plausibly be derived. *Bairn* is semantically related to *bantling*, Given the meaning of *bantling*, as derived from the context of the quote from Prior, possibly along with Johnson's own awarness the word's use in other writings or even oral speech, *bairn* is semantically related. Johnson then presumes three changes: a vowel change, the loss of *r*, and the insertion of a *t* between the *n* and *l*. As is well known, Johnson and etymologists before him played freely with vowels. The other two conjectured changes are not unique to the entry for *bantling*. Johnson notes *r*-dropping in other conjectural corruptions in the entries for *bully*, *moky*, as well as *nousel*, *nustle*, and *nuzzle*:

> BU'LLY. n.s. [*Skinner* derives this word from *burly*, as a corruption in the pronunciation; which is very probably right. . . . <even though Johnson offers other possibilities>]
> MO'KY. adj. Dark: as, moky weather. *Ains.* It seems a corruption of *murky*. In some places they call it *muggy*. Dusky; cloudy. <no quote; 1755: "It seems a corruption of murky: and in some places they call it muggy, dusky.">
> To NOU'SEL. v.a. [The same I believe with *nuzzel*, and both in their original import, corrupted from *nursle*.] To nurse up. . . .
> To NU'STLE. v.a. To fondle; to cherish. Corrupted from *nursle*. See NUZZLE.
> *Ains*. To NU'ZZLE. v.a. [This word, in its original signification, seems corrupted from *nursle*; but when its original meaning was forgotten, writers supposed it to come from *nozzle* or *nose*, and in that sense used it.]

1. To nurse; to foster. . . .

In other entries, Johnson notes the insertion of both consonants within words, which modern linguists term *epenthesis*, a term Johnson includes in the *Dictionary*:

> EPE'NTHESIS.n.s. . . . [In grammar.] The addition of a vowel or consonant in the middle of a word. *Harris*.

In his comments on corruptions, Johnson conjectures various corruptions that might be termed epenthetic: *alarum* from *alarm*; *callipers* from *clippers*; *clink* from *click*; *trinket* from *tricket*; *tenant-saw* from *tenon-saw*, and *nustle* from *nursle* (see above), which presumably underwent both *r*-loss and epenthesis.

> ALA'RUM. n.s. [corrupted, as it seems, from *alarm*.]⁴²⁶. . . .
> CA'LLIPERS. n.s. [Of this word I know not the etymology, nor does any thing more probable occur, than that, perhaps, the word is corrupted from *clippers*, instruments with which any thing is *clipped*, inclosed or embraced.] Compasses with bowed shanks. *Moxon's Mechanical Exercises*.
> To CLINK. v.a. [perhaps softened from *clank*, or corrupted from *click*.] To strike so as to make a small sharp noise. *Shakesp.*
> TE'NANT-SAW. n.s. [corrupted, I suppose, from *tenon-saw*.] See TENON. <sic>
> TRI'NKET. n.s. [This *Skinner* derives somewhat harshly from *trinquet*, Fr. *trinchetto*, Ital. a *topsail*. I rather imagine it corrupted from *tricket*, some petty finery or decoration.]
> 1. Toys; ornaments of dress; superfluities of decoration. *Sidney, ~~b. ii~~*.; *~~Shakesp~~*.; *Shakesp*. *Winter's Tale*.; *Dryden's Juv*.; *Arbuthnot~~'s Hist. of John Bull~~*.; *Swift*.
> 2. Things of no great value; tackle; tools. *Tuss*.; *L'Estr*.

When we place Johnson's comments on *bantling* in the context of other, clearly related entries (the entry for *ling* and its manifestations in other entries, entries wherein Johnson's uses "corruption" as an analytical term) we get a different picture than the one Sorenson provides of what Johnson is up to in the entry for *bantling*.

[426] This end bracket is new to the fourth edition.

The passage "perhaps corrupted from the old word *bairn*, *bairnling*, a little child" partly demonstrates the way a corruption might have happened, as Johnson does in several other entries:

> BAG.n.s. [belge, Sax. from whence perhaps by dropping, as is usual, the harsh consonant, came *bege*, *bage*, *bag*.]
> BUMBA'ILIFF.n.s. [This is a corruption of *bound* bailiff, pronounced by gradual corruption, *boun*, *bun*, *bum* bailiff.] . . .[427]
> To CLA'MBER.v.n. [probably corrupted from *climb*; as *climber*, *clamber*.] . . . .
> CLU'MSY.adj. [This word, omitted in the other etymologists, is rightly derived by *Bailey* from *lompsch*, Dutch, stupid. In English, *lump*, *clump*, *lumpish*, *clumpish*, *clumpishly*, *clumsily*, *clumsy*.] . . . .
> To CRI'MPLE.v.a. [from *rumple*, *crumple*, *crimple*.] . . . .
> To DRI'BBLE.v.n. [This word seems to have come from *drop* by successive alterations, such as are usual in living languages. *Drop*, *drip*, *dripple*, *dribble*, from thence *drivel* and *driveler*. *Drip* may indeed be the original word, from the Danish *drypp*.] . . .
> To DRI'VEL.v.n. [from *drip*, *dripple*, *dribble*, drivel.] . . .
> To HO'BBLE.v.n. [to *hop*, to *hopple*, to *hobble*.] . . . .
> SKA'DDLE.n.s. [sceathnisse,[428] Saxon; *scath* is harm; thence *scathle*, *scaddle*.] Hurt; damage. *Dict*.
> To SLOP.v.a. [from *lap*, *lop*, *slop*.] To drink grossly and greedily.[429]
> SMI'CKET.n.s. [Diminutive of *smock*, *smocket*, *smicket*.] The under garment of a woman.[430]

As these examples show, Johnson sometimes makes his presumed corruptions more explicit than he does under *bantling*, and sometimes he does not even call them corruptions. It is possible to read "*bairn*, *bairnling*" as another of Johnson's illustrations of gradual corruption: *Smock*, *smocket*, *smicket*; *hop*, *hopple*, *hobble*; *bairn*, *bairnling*, *bantling*. Thus Johnson's "*bairn*, *bairnling*," may be a shorthand way for Johnson to

[427] This is the revised 1773 version.
[428] "Th" here is, in the original, an "eth" (ð).
[429] This entry includes no illustrative quotation.
[430] This entry is not included in the 1755 edition; this entry includes no illustrative quotation.

clarify for readers how he gets from *bairn* to *bantling*; a process which, on the model of the above examples might be elaborated thus:

bairn > *bairnling* > *bainling* or *barnling* > *banling* > *bantling*.

This reconstruction of Johnson's is just that, a reconstruction, but one that accounts for evidence of Johnson's practices in the *Dictionary* that is largely ignored, overlooked, or misinterpreted.

For various reasons, I regard Sorenson's reading of Johnson's "labels" as a misreading, not simply an alternative to my own. In assuming that phrases like "corrupted," "of certain etymology," and "still retained in Scotland" are all disparaging warning labels meant to "limit or curtail the usage of these suspect words and prevent their further reproduction," Sorenson must assume that all of these "labels" function in the same unitary way—as derogatory labels—regardless of their context within an entry.[431] Yet as this dissertation demonstrates, Johnson's use of the term "corruption" is not univocal but multivalent, and its resonance and function depend largely on the context of use within the entry. If we always read Johnson's comments on corruption as warning labels, then we must assume that Johnson meant to curtail and limit the use of *chicken*, *corporal*, *elder*, *gun*, *modern*, *platoon*, and *stocking*. Likewise, Johnson's comment that a word has an "doubtful etymology" is more often than not a hedge or a qualifier preceding his own conjecture, or a confession of ignorance that must be admitted or passed over with an act of silent omission, since Johnson's default entry structure leads readers to expect, generally, an etymology, or at least a gesture toward

[431] Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 79, 91.

one, in each entry. Johnson's comment on uncertain etymology, rather than being an act of regulation or prescription opens the space between the brackets to conjecture and emendation. By artificially narrowing the function and meaning of Johnson's terms of metatextual commentary, we read the *Dictionary* with artificial blinders, often finding the authoritarian Doctor we already expected to see. By providing accounts of the rhetoric of the Preface, the integral nature of the structure of the entry, the hypertextual nature of the *Dictionary*, and the polysemy of "corruption" I hope to raise critical awareness about the ways we often unwittingly accept these artificial blinders, whose effect is compounded by the limits already placed on readers by the size and structure of the dictionary.

Becoming one of Johnson's "Corrupted" Readers: Rabinowitz's "Authorial Reading" and the Dictionary

Peter Rabinowitz, in *Before Reading*, is not the first critic to talk about the reading conventions we bring to the texts we read, but his account of "authorial reading" loosely approximates what I have tried to do in this study. For Rabinowitz, "authorial reading" involves reading a text as what he calls the "authorial audience." The "authorial audience" does not comprise the "flesh-and-blood people who read a book," but rather a hypothetical audience whose presence influences the author's particular choices. Authors, Rabinowitz writes, "cannot begin to fill up a blank page without making assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. As a result authors are forced to guess; they design their books rhetorically for some more or less

specific *hypothetical* audience, which I call the *authorial audience*."[432] As Rabinowitz explains, the

> notion of authorial audience is clearly tied to authorial intention, but it gets around some of the problems that have traditionally hampered the discussion of intention by treating it as a matter of social convention rather than of individual psychology. In other words, my perspective allows us to treat the reader's attempt to read as the author intended, not as a search for the author's private psyche, but rather as the joining of a particular social/interpretive community; that is, the acceptance of the author's invitation to read in a particular socially constituted way that is shared by the author and his or her expected readers. . . . By thinking in terms of the authorial audience rather than private intention, furthermore, we are reminded of the constraints within which writers write. . . . [A]uthors can put down whatever marks they wish on the page; readers can construe them however they wish. But once authors and readers accept the communal nature of writing and reading, they give up some of that freedom.[433]

As Rabinowitz points out, authorial reading involves neither Northrop Frye's notion of "disinterested response" nor Stanley Fish's "automaton who approaches each new sentence with the same anesthetized mind," nor Gerald Prince's "degree-zero naratee" who has "no personality or social characteristics" and is thus "capabale of reading a text without distorting presuppositions."[434] Authorial reading

> does *not* escape "distorting presuppositions." Rather, it recognizes that distorting presuppositions lie at the heart of the reading process. . . . To join the authorial audience, then, you should not ask what a *pure* reading of a given text would be. Rather, you need to ask what sort of *corrupted* reader this particular author wrote for: what were the reader's beliefs, engagements, commitments, prejudices, and stampedings of pity and terror.[435]

In my own reading of the Preface, reconstructing such a "corrupted reader" also involves asking questions about the material circumstances that could be expected to obtain such

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[432] Peter Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 2nd ed. David H. Richter, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1998), 999.
[433] Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," 1000.
[434] Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," 1001-02.
[435] Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," 1002.

that the reader and text came into contact. Thus, we are not only concerned about how lexicographers were often described (as *men* of industry, not genius), how it was awkward for Johnson to put himself forward in the Preface, how the audience expected a work of national significance and pride; we are also concerned about the ways that nascent book reviewing practices in popular magazines played a role in constructing the authorial audience for the Preface. In "the case of successful authorial reading, the author and readers are members of the same community, so while the reader does in fact engage in an act of production, he or she makes what the author intended to be found. Of course, . . . not all attempts at authorial reading are successful."[436]

Like Rabinowitz, I agree that authorial reading is not the only or necessarily the best way to read; yet it is "more than just another among a large set of equally valid and equally important ways of approaching a text" (1004) for two reasons: "many readers try to engage in it" (1005) and

> many types of reading depend for their power on a prior understanding of the authorial meaning. The manifest/latent distinction of certain Freudian studies, for instance, collapses if we don't have a manifest meaning to begin with. . . . [W]e see the same dependence on authorial intention in much feminist criticism. Judith Fetterley's 'resisting reader' can come into being only if there is something to resist. (1004-05)

Almost any discussion of Johnson's *Dictionary* takes some position on Johnson's intentions and a critics' assumptions about those intentions strongly influence their readings of Johnson's entries. Even though the Preface is generally considered a retreat from the more prescriptive *Plan*, Johnson leaves speaks out of both sides of his mouth in the Preface, noting, on the one hand, I "do not form, but register the language" (para. 75),

[436] Rabinowitz, "From *Before Reading*," 1003.

and on the other, it "remains that we retard what we cannot repel" (para. 91). Referring to the great amount of ink spilled "about whether Johnson hoped to fix English or merely to record it," Sorenson suggests that we avoid discussing Johnson's intentions altogether. "Despite Johnson's own anti-prescriptivist attitude, it is important to note that before communicating anything else, the *Dictionary* communicates a conception of language as ordered and unitary. We would do well to consider the *Dictionary* not in terms of Johnson's intentions, but in terms of the symbolic market in which it participates."[437] Despite this statement, relegated to a footnote, Sorenson's reading of Johnson's "labels" clearly relies on assumptions about his intentions. I do not pretend to know Johnson's intentions, but I do know that by taking Johnson's intentions as expressed in the *Plan* or the Preface too literally without considering either the rhetorical circumstances of those documents or the context of Johnson's metatextual comments, we ignore the very evidence that would make it possible to produce even more nuanced, better substantiated arguments about Johnson's ideas about language as well as their epistemological and ideological foundations.

> Thus, in arguing for the importance of reading as authorial audience, I am not suggesting that it is either the final reading or the most important. . . . I would be disappointed in a student who could produce an authorial reading but who could not, in Terry Eagleton's phrase, "show the text as it cannot know itself"—that is, move beyond that reading to look at the work critically from some perspective other than the one called for by the author. But while authorial reading without further critique is often incomplete, so is a critical reading without an understanding of the authorial audience as its base. (1005)

Despite the deliberately provocative title of this dissertation's second chapter, I recognize that there is no single way to read the *Dictionary*. Yet I do agree with Rabinowitz that

[437] Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 64, 245 (continuation of n. 7).

authorial reading provides an important point of orientation from which other readings can depart.

> [A]uthorial reading has a special status against which other readings can be measured (although not necessarily negatively); it is a kind of norm (although not necessarily a positive value), in that it serves as a point of orientation (although not necessarily as an ultimate destination). In short, authorial reading—in the sense of *understanding* the values of the authorial audience—has its own kind of validity, even if, in the end, actual readers share neither the experiences nor the values presumed by the author. (1007)

In trying to function as an authorial reader, I fully appreciate the need for 'resisting readers,' and do not believe that the point of orientation this study serves as an ultimate destination. But I argue, as Rabinowitz does, that the approaches of resisting readers and authorial readers alike will stand on firmer ground and will be more valuable given such a point of orientation. We will be more equipped to argue about what Johnson elides, for instance, when we stop eliding from our representations of his text those parts that are inconvenient or seem uninteresting.

The authorial readings this dissertation provides are necessary because they draw attention to the ways in which our sources for understanding Johnson as a linguistic thinker open themselves up to misreadings, a term which I, like Rabinowitz use here "to refer not to readings that simply skirt the authorial audience, but rather to readings that *attempt* to incorporate the strategies of the authorial audience, but fail to do so" (1010). These misreadings occur, however, not just because of a critic's ideological predilections or methodological and theoretical commitments, but because Johnson's own *Plan* and Preface both contain statements that allow us to emphasize the prescriptivist or the descriptivist, depending on which statements we quote. We also tend to read the *Plan* and

Preface as straightforward guides to the contents of the Dictionary, often disregarding the function of those paratexts as historically and rhetorically situated documents of self-fashioning. Moreover, these misreadings occur, as I have argued, because the interpretive conventions we bring to the task of reading (or consulting, as the case may be) the *Dictionary* are different from those of the authorial audience. Not only do we compartmentalize the various elements of the *Dictionary* (and often ignore the etymologies because their longstanding reputation as foolish renders them presumably irrelevant to the modern reader), but we also tend to miss the multifunctional nature of Johnson's metatextual commentaries, and the polysemy of Johnson's metatextual vocabulary (especially "corruption") that allows the authorial audience to recognize those various functions, even when they operate simultaneously, in comparison to most of today's actual audiences. In addition, by reading the *Dictionary* as a polemic (Reddick), or as a text with themes (DeMaria), or as a *discourse colony* composed of unrelated textual islands (McDermott and Walsh), some of the most important studies of the *Dictionary* depart from authorial reading even when they presume to engage in it: thus, the *Dictionary* is Anglican polemic for Reddick, a didactic encyclopedia for DeMaria.

The authorial readings that this study provides are also important because we simply cannot know the text of the *Dictionary* in the way we can know the text of *Tom Jones* or other novels. For example, those who study the *Dictionary* must deal with the fact that they will likely not read the *Dictionary* from cover to cover, at least not in this decade. Thus I, like critics before me, have had to come with my own ways to meet the hermeneutic challenges posed by the *Dictionary*, sampling the text with an increasing

understanding of the ways in which the text is, as James Sledd, Gwin Kolb, and Robert DeMaria, Jr. have pointed out, a redaction of previous practices and even of previous content; and the ways in which, as Allen Reddick has demonstrated, it is a "text in flux."[438]

If I promote an authorial reading of the *Dictionary* I do not do so under the spell of a post-Romantic notion of authorship. As Sledd, Kolb, DeMaria, Reddick and others have made clear, Johnson's *Dictionary*, like all dictionaries, is quite literally intertextual, since lexicographers have always incorporated the content of earlier dictionaries. Johnson often acknowledges such borrowings, but not always. Moreover, the "precise extent and nature" of the amanuenses' "responsibilities remain largely unclear" (Reddick, 218 n. 12).[439] Yet the longstanding notion that the *Dictionary* was in some simple way the product of Johnson's intellect and genius is not the product of post-Romantic fancy; it was a notion that Johnson actively encouraged in his dramatic portrayal of lexicographic travail in the Preface, a document suffused with the first person. As a text whose value relied in part on its ability to claim authoritativeness, the *Dictionary* needed to display its credentials and obscure factors that might mitigate or undermine its claims to authority. As much as Johnson underscores the obstacles he faced in struggling with the language, he never tries to deflect blame for faults by mentioning his amanuenses. The heroic ethos of moral and intellectual struggle in the Preface depends largely on the notion that the work was "written" (not compiled) with "little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of

[438] Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 8.
[439] Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 218 n. 12.

academick bowers, but amid inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and sorrow."[440] In presenting the *Dictionary* to the public, Johnson is willing to take credit and blame for the contents: "[I]f our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed."[441] The success or the failure, for Johnson's authorial audience, would be attributed to him. Without being able to know exactly how, or the extent to which, the amanuenses contributed to the entries, we can say that Johnson generally acted (wrote) as if the contents were largely of his own making. Johnson took responsibility for the contents of the *Dictionary*, and given that Allen Reddick has shown that Johnson, in fact, did oversee the work of his amanuenses in the fourth edition, it is reasonable to agree with Reddick's assessment that the contributions of amanuenses to the text were subject to Johnson's approval.

For these reasons I have allowed myself in this study to act and write as if all metatextual commentary in the *Dictionary* originates with, and represents both the linguistic thinking and interpretive methods of, Johnson, but some of the metatextual commentary may have actually been penned by Johnson's amanuenses, especially the comments on usage "still retained in Scotland," given the fact five of Johnson's amanuenses were Scotsmen. There is little reason to expect that without the help of these amanuenses, or the testimony of other Scots speakers or writers, Johnson would have been able to attest to what was retained in Scotland. "Macbean," the only amanuensis mentioned by name in the *Dictionary*, is given credit for metatextual commentary and definitions in the entries for three entries in the *Dictionary*, *loord*, *to mounch*/*to maunch*,

[440] Preface, para. 94.
[441] Preface, para. 94.

and *sorn*.[442] The metatextual commentaries for *loord* and *sorn* are longer than is usual in the *Dictionary*, but the commentary on *mounch*/*maunch* is consistent with the commentary we have examined in this study. Testimony from the Ainsworth's Latin-English dictionary, contemporary Scots usage, and the presumed etymological ties to French *manger* are all presented to gloss a passage from Shakespeare's 'Scottish play':

> To MOUNCH / To MAUNCH. *v.a.* [*mouch*, to eat much. *Ains.* This word is retained in Scotland, and denotes the obtunded action of toothless gums on a hard crust, or any thing eatable: it seems to be a corruption of the French word *manger*. *Macbean*.]
>
> A sailor's wife had chesnuts in her lap,
> And *mouncht*, and *mouncht*, and *mouncht*. *Shakesp. Macbeth*.

This entry, presented as it appears, is unusual in that the only definition is placed within, rather than after, the brackets. But it is typical in the way Macbean's commentary circuits what I have called Johnson's lexicographic-hermeneutic triangle: etymology, usage, and meaning. In its use of Scots both to gloss passages of older English texts and to justify a proposed definition, in its use of corruption to conjecture an etymology, this entry employs the same complementary interpretive strategies that we see throughout the *Dictionary*.

It is impossible to know whether or not every unattributed metatextual commentary can be ascribed definitively to Johnson, but the presence of Macbean's attribution, along with similar attributions to living correspondents, suggests that Johnson is willing to acknowledge those who provide etymological information. Johnson

[442] A CD-ROM search of the *Dictionary* for names of the amanuenses found only "Macbean." Aside from the metatextual commentary in the entries listed above, four lines of verse used in the 1755 edition to illustrate *scale* are attributed to "Macbean"; see *scale* n.s. 7; these lines are absent in the 1773 edition. Two Macbeans worked on the *Dictionary*: Alexander Macbean, a former amanuensis for Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia* described by Johnson as "a man of great learning," and Alexander's brother William. For more on the Macbeans, see Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, 62.

acknowledges the help of his friend, the Scottish philosopher James Beattie, who helped him revise the entry for *fren* and the etymology for *humblebee*:

> FREN.n.s. ~~A worthless woman~~. A stranger. An old word wholly forgotten here; but retained in Scotland. *Beattie*.
>
> But now from me his madding mind is start,
> And wooes the widow's daughter of the glen;
> And now fair Rosalind hath bred his smart,
> So now his friend is changed for a *fren*. *Spenser's Past*.
>
> HU'MBLEBEE.n.s. [*hum* and *bee*. What may be the true etymology of this word, I am in doubt. The *humblebee* is known to have no sting. The Scotch call a cow without horns an *humble cow*; so that the word seems to signify *inermis*, wanting the natural weapons. Dr. *Beattie*.] A buzzing wild bee.
>
> The honeybags steal from the *humblebees*,
> And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs. *Shakespeare*.
>
> This puts us in mind once again of the *humblebees* and the tinderboxes. *Atterbury*.

Johnson similarly credits other contemporaries with etymological information: Edward Lye ("Mr. Lye" in several etymologies), as well as "Dr. Lawrence," perhaps Johnson's friend, Dr. Thomas Lawrence (1711-83), (under *bachelor*), "Mr. Dier" (under *ugly*), George Steevens, Johnson's collaborator on his Shakespeare edition ("Mr. Steevens" under *beef-eater* and *bombast*), and Francis Wise, the Oxford librarian who helped Johnson secure his honorary M.A. from Oxford ("Mr. Wise" under *warlock*/*warluck*). The relative rarity of these types of attributions also suggests that Johnson only infrequently felt the need to make them.

These qualifications aside, I assume with Anne McDermott and Marcus Walsh that the *Dictionary* contains "[e]vidence of Johnson's shaping intelligence."[443] Even when amanuenses or friends such as Francis Wise supplied information to be used in

[443] Anne McDermott and Marcus Walsh, "Editing Johnson's *Dictionary*," 45.

Johnson's metatext ("This etymology was communicated by Mr. *Wise*."), the decision to include it, and the decision about how to present it (with or without qualification or objection), the rationale for including it, and the method for integrating it within the entry—all rest with Johnson. Robert DeMaria, Jr. and Gwin J. Kolb, who make the most vigorous recent case for viewing the *Dictionary* as an act of redaction rather than an act of creation, conclude that the "part of the *Dictionary* that is truly Johnson's . . . is in his commentary on the work that he presents, rather than in the body of the work itself."[444] My own interpretation of Johnson as a linguist in the *Dictionary* requires that I unify various comments in the metatext and present them as material shaped and manipulated by Johnson's "shaping intelligence," but if I propose a kind of unity to the text of the *Dictionary*, it is not the kind of unity proposed by DeMaria—a unity of theme and didactic intention—but a unity of method and terminology. The *Dictionary* as presented in this dissertation is not a New Critical organic whole, but nonetheless a text unified in the ways I describe in Chapters 2 and 3—by the hypertextual connections within the text and the consistent function and voice of the metatext within the entry. Yet if the metatextual commentary in the *Dictionary* shows signs of "Johnson's shaping intelligence" his interpretive methods and vocabulary draw on precedents in lexicography, etymology, textual criticism, phonetics, antiquarian research—the eclectic constellation of methods constituting eighteenth-century philology. It is this eclectic and interrelated set of interpretive practices that, I argue, Johnson draws on when loosely forming or considering his authorial audience, and this study brings attention to this

[444] Robert DeMaria, Jr. and Gwin J. Kolb, "Johnson's *Dictionary* and Dictionary Johnson," 26.

interrelated set of interpretive practices. I hope with this study to provide a firmer basis than has yet existed for an authorial reading of the *Dictionary*, since its special status as a nationalistic icon, as a repository of nostalgia, reverence, and contempt, will continue to draw at least the passing attention of literary critics, cultural critics, linguists, as well as historians of linguistics, lexicography, and the English language.

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